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THE  
CAPACITY OF NEGROES  
FOR  
Religious and Moral Improvement  
CONSIDERED:  
WITH CURSORY HINTS,  
TO PROPRIETORS AND TO GOVERNMENT,  
FOR THE  
IMMEDIATE MELIORATION  
OF THE  
CONDITION OF SLAVES  
IN THE  
SUGAR COLONIES:  
TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED  
SHORT AND PRACTICAL  
*DISCOURSES to NEGROES,*  
ON THE  
PLAIN AND OBVIOUS PRINCIPLES  
OF  
RELIGION AND MORALITY.

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BY RICHARD NISBET,

OF THE ISLAND OF NEVIS

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—The Light that leads to Heaven,  
Kind equal Rule, the Government of Laws,

— — — — —  
These are not theirs.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.



NEGRO UNIVERSITIES PRESS  
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## P R E F A C E,

**T**HE following humble attempt to lead to the investigation of truth, and to promote the cause of religion and humanity, consists partly of some observations which once made their appearance in the Gazette of the island of St. Christopher in the West Indies; but as the author was precluded from continuing to disclose his sentiments through that channel, by unexpected and unforeseen impediments, he has thought it incumbent on him to avail himself of an occasional visit to his native country, to complete his intended publication; that opinions may not be suppressed which he believes to be founded in truth, and thinks may be in some measure useful.

It

It will probably appear somewhat extraordinary to the reader who has never visited the sugar colonies, that any reasoning should be enforced, to prove what appears so evident as “ The capacity of negroes for religious and moral improvement, in common with the rest of mankind.” But the author is fully persuaded, from some observation and experience, and (he will candidly add) from having heretofore felt, in this instance, the force of evil custom upon the mind, that the extreme inattention of masters to cultivate virtuous principles among their slaves, and to govern them as *man* ought to be governed, arises, in a great measure, from a rooted opinion against their talents for receiving instruction. He has therefore made it his principal aim to combat this opinion with such obvious arguments and proofs, as have long ago satisfied him that every prejudice against this unfortunate people is a mere illusion, proceeding from the errors of the human passions, and from the natural but pernicious abuses which follow an unlimited power of tyrannizing

tyrannizing over our fellow-creatures. After the discussion of this part of the subject, he has proceeded to point out a plan for the melioration of the condition of slaves, without hazard and without expense; and has further intimated what may be effected on the part of government, to assist in rendering their situations more comfortable, until a better and more consolidated scheme can be adopted in their favour.

It is about three years ago, since the author first determined to undertake the religious instruction of a few domestick slaves of his own. After some consideration upon the most probable means of success, he concluded that short and easy discourses, gradually unfolding the most plain and obvious principles of religion and morality, in a manner so as not to confuse the ignorant and uncultivated mind, nor fatigue the attention, were the best adapted to the purpose; and therefore he composed and delivered those which now form a part of this work. They abound with repetitions, because

cause repetitions were necessary; and were written with some attention to a stile and method suitable to the dialect and conceptions of the hearers. But though the author has to lament the want of sufficient leisure, and the pressure of many cares and avocations of business, which prevented him from allotting to them that time and study, which the importance of their object both required and deserved; he is yet fully convinced, from the effects they have produced, that it requires nothing but a rational mode of instruction, sedulously pursued, to lead a negro to comprehend and to follow the path to a better world, as clearly and strictly as the rest of mankind. Further, he has satisfied himself, that a plan of religious instruction for negroes, which is to operate cautiously and progressively, by impressing their minds with a clear and strong sense of the general and practical principles of the Christian religion, is better adapted to their improvement, than any premature attempts to inculcate the mysteries of a doctrine, which,

however

however excellent and true, they cannot at once comprehend. For it is indeed indispensably necessary, in their present depraved and perverted condition, first to teach them that there is an Almighty Being, who created them for goodness and happiness, before they can be induced to believe, that the Son of that Being was sacrificed for the redemption and salvation of mankind. And so far is this plan from being at all incongruous with the most orthodox tenets of Christianity, that one of the most learned and able divines of the church of England, has proceeded upon a similar foundation, to prove the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation.\* The author trusts, therefore, that he will not incur the charge of presumption, by having adopted the plan which he now ventures to recommend; still keeping in view the end to which it is to lead, which he has faithfully done; having, since the disuse of his discourses, gradually unfolded to his negroes the principles of the Christian

\* Dr. Samuel Clarke.

religion, with some success, and advantage from the manner in which he first began to instruct them.

It now only remains for the author to solicit the candour and indulgence of the reader, towards the defects of the following sheets, which he thinks he may in some measure claim, as well in consideration of their design, as that they are written by one who, from the age of puerility, has passed his life in an ungenial climate, chiefly in those scenes of painful vicissitude and adversity, which leave the mind to languish in vain for knowledge and improvement. The subject itself, not the most entertaining at best, and ably treated as it has been by men of literary abilities, is, at least, a sufficient proof, that he has not taken up the pen with a view to reputation or profit : and he will therefore perhaps be believed, when he asserts that, in thus committing his sentiments to the publick, his greatest concern is, that the execution of his little work is far short of its intention ; and his most sanguine wish is,

that

that it may please Providence so to direct his opinions, as that they may, in some measure, contribute to introduce those relations, without which no authority over such a being as *man*, can be morally or politically supported, into that system of slavery, which now prevails in our sugar colonies, to prepare it for that final dissolution, to which true religion and philosophy must look forward with hope and expectation.

LONDON, Nov. 1789.





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T H E  
CAPACITY OF NEGROES  
F O R  
R E L I G I O U S  
A N D  
MORAL IMPROVEMENT  
C O N S I D E R E D.

---

**W**HETHER a negro be capable of equalling a Newton or a Milton, or whether his faculties be limited so as to qualify him only for the servile stations of human life, have been questions of long, but of fruitless discussion. They appear to remain as undecided as when they were at  
first

first proposed, while a truth which is more easy to be discovered, *The negroes ability to be actuated by religious and moral principles*, has been too little noticed in the extremes of opposite parties : one of which is, perhaps, solicitous to attain more than can be immediately conceded, consistently with either policy or utility ; the other, unwilling to part with authority, and therefore inclined to suffer slavery to remain as it is, destitute of those relations and causes which are indispensable to the improvement and happiness of mankind. Hence it is my intention to introduce those reflections which have occurred to me upon the subject, with an hypothesis, *That a negro is created with the power of conscientiously discharging his duty towards God and man*, and to proceed to prove it, by bringing it to the standards of religion, reason, and experience. These are the surest means of conviction ; and if that conviction be once attained, it is not all the subtilty of sophistry, that can excuse the system of African slavery, as it at present stands, or evade or oppose its reformation.

When

When I mention religion, I hold it needless to appeal to the real follower of the Christian faith, who must necessarily conclude, from the tenets of that doctrine, that a negro has a soul to be saved as well as himself, and of course a capacity for salvation. But as there are many who call themselves Christians, without being able to assign any reason “for the faith that is in them,” and many whose opinions incline more to natural than revealed religion, such must be reasoned with, and, if possible, satisfied. As for the Atheist, if there be such a person, I shall have but little to observe to him; for to a man who believes that he came into existence by chance, and that in a few years his existence is to terminate, the only channel of persuasion is, to appeal to his immediate interest, enjoyment, and ease. This appeal, however, is not likely to fall within the compass of my design; too limited as it is to extend to the investigation of that increase of profit, convenience and comfort, which would accrue to the proprietor,

from

from the communication of improvement to his slaves, and his adherence to the principles of a just form of government in all that concerns their management and direction. I must, therefore, refer the man, whose hopes and fears are limited to this side of the grave, and whose only objects are present wealth and pleasure, to that fund of information and of reasoning, which is to be discovered in the productions of those abler advocates for Afric's unfortunate offspring, who have treated the subject in a more elaborate and masterly manner, than I have either the leisure, or the powers of doing.

To return then from this short digression. That there is an uncontrollable disposition throughout human nature to believe in the existence of the Deity, is too trite an observation to need being enlarged upon at present. But there is also a disposition to believe something more. There is a disposition to believe, that his excellence surpasses all that humanity can form an idea of, and in particular, that he is the essence of benevolence,

volence, and of mercy, towards his creatures. Hence we cannot conceive him to act with malevolence and inconsistency, because they would imply weakness and defect; and in consequence, we cannot conceive that he has created a rational being, without making him at the same time, a moral and accountable agent, according to his degrees of knowledge and opportunities of improvement. It is with this disposition that we universally form our opinions of the action of the Supreme Being; and it is by this, that we shall invariably be governed, so long as man considers himself as an animal endowed with reason, for active and for elevated purposes, in spite of every attempt to question our right of exerting it. Our first consideration therefore is, Whether it be possible to cherish this exalted temper of mind, and withal to conceive that the Divine Creator of the universe, has formed a fourth part of the human race, with the affections, the attachments, and the distinctions of rational beings, and has sent them into the world under the insurmountable pressure of a sentence, evidently



dently as unjust as severe and vindictive ?  
 “ *I have endowed you with sufficient under-  
 “ standing to discern good from evil, but with-  
 “ out the free will and power to make your  
 “ own election. You shall be completely vici-  
 “ ous, and completely wretched. Your lives  
 “ shall be spent in misery here, and you shall  
 “ be unable to lay a foundation for happiness  
 “ in a future state.*” The question admits  
 not of a moment’s pause. It is, in fact,  
 impossible that two such opposite impres-  
 sions, one of which is consistent with the  
 purest principles of theology, and the hopes  
 and belief of all the enlightened world; the  
 other, fatal to every idea of piety or virtue,  
 could ever exist in the same breast. Must  
 we then abandon the former to make room  
 for the latter, and endeavour to cancel that  
 sacred and awful impression, which the Deity  
 hath stamped of himself upon our hearts; to  
 conceive that he is capable of cruelty and  
 injustice, because it gratifies our avarice,  
 our vanity, or indolence ; to keep an  
 ignorant African without a knowledge of  
 his God, and to establish neither reli-  
 gious,

gious, moral, or civil relation, in that system to which he is subjugated. O slavery ! much hast thou to answer for ; but it is not the least of thy defects, that, in corrupting many a benevolent heart, and perverting many a sound understanding, thou hast implanted in them prejudices, which lead to such absurd and impious conclusions as these !

But admitting, for argument's sake, it were possible, without departing from our ideas of the goodness of Divine Providence, to conceive, *That the whole African race has been created destitute of a capacity for religious and moral improvement*, we should still be at a loss to discover upon what rational principles we consider ourselves so greatly distinguished above them. For after every observation which has been made upon the subject, by men of different and very opposite opinions, there is confessedly so great a similarity between ourselves and the African, that, if we once dispute his right to reason and free-will, we shall have cause  
to

to be very doubtful of our own. Nay, we may venture to go further, and to pronounce, that if we proceed to examine the moral conduct of each, we shall find no adequate foundation for that excessive superiority, which it is our boast to assert above him. When we advert to those various channels of improvement and of science, which it is our pride to engross, but from which he is precluded ; when we consider how few there are of us who occupy them with effect, or apply those acquirements to which they have conducted us, to their proper end ; when we reflect how much we are immersed in the indulgences of sense, to the degradation and prejudice of that reason which God has implanted, and education has cultivated ; and how large a portion of civilized mankind, are not so much under the restraint of morality, as of the dread of those punishments which the laws of society have instituted ; we shall probably have sufficient cause to infer, that there is *comparatively* as little virtue in our state of refined and polished life, as there is in the negro's rude state  
of

of government in Africa, or in his state of perversion in the West-Indies. A few observations upon each of these conditions will corroborate the truth of this assertion.

We know too little of Africa, and the real condition of its inhabitants, to reason with much precision concerning an African, until the period of his slavery in the colonies be commenced. We learn indeed, that upon the borders of its ocean, where an intercourse with foreigners is frequent, and where some faint sketches of European art and science have been conducted, chiefly by the refuse of our own societies, there is a degree of civilization and superior intelligence, which gradually decreases in its interior parts, in proportion as the cause diminishes or ceases in its operation. This, however, is a proof, among many others, that the natives are endowed with a capacity for improvement, which, when left to the exertion of their own powers, they do not fail to make use of. From the African enslaved, we only find that he regrets the loss of kindred

dred and of friends, and of a country where he lived in plenty, without any extraordinary exertions of labour; our first actual view of him being after he has been seduced by fraud, or torn by violence, from these dear and natural rights and possessions, and transported to the colonies under coercion and imprisonment. Here then we may contemplate the condition of the African, whose existence is now to be fashioned to our purposes, and for ever wrested from the pursuit of his own. We find him then in a state, little differing from a state of nature; immersed in that ignorance of refinement and of science, in which it pleased the Supreme Creator of us all, to suffer countries now the most exquisitely polished, to remain for ages in the earlier date of the world. It must still be observed, that we find him with all the feelings and attachments of a rational being, nor with any peculiar marks of depravity about him, however the vanity of an extreme civilization (which is incapacitated by its own habits and prejudices, from forming a just and impartial opinion of mankind,

in

in a rude and simple state) and the suggestions of a selfishness, which cannot be supposed capable of a disinterested decision, may naturally conceive a prepossession against him. But if such ideas of the agency of the Deity as may be reasonably expected in an uninformed mind ; if a natural modesty, not exceeded by that of the most polished societies of men ; if a perfect sense of the principles of self-love, and self-preservation, those springs of action to all mankind ; if affection to parents and kindred ; if a cultivation of acquaintance and friendship, upon principles similar to those, on which they are formed among ourselves ; if fidelity in that acquaintance and friendship ; if regard and gratitude towards those who are kind to him, and aversion and resentment towards those who injure him ; if a strength of idea, and force of expression on many occasions, which mark a considerable acuteness of understanding ; if all these be lineaments of humanity, without depravity, they are lineaments which characterize the African. Discovering then these indications of rational powers,

powers, and natural sensibility in him, it would be as inconsistent with sound reason and philosophy, as with the ends of fair inquiry, were we to infer from conjectures and assertions so much to be suspected as those of vanity and avarice, that a state of nature to the African, is a state of depravity more than to the rest of mankind : much less is it justifiable to cherish so presumptuous and impious a thought, as that he was formed by his Creator for the purposes of our convenience, without any condition to be observed on our part, to his temporal ease and comfort, and his religious and moral conduct.

But let us now impartially examine the customary catalogue of the African's crimes, accused as he is of insensibility and depravity of heart. This defrauded *Esau* then steals a *mess of pottage* from the *Jacob* who has deprived him of his *birth-right*, by applying his existence to labour for his own purposes, and neglecting in return to contribute to his improvement and happiness.

To

To escape detection and punishment, he uses artifice and falsehood to one who has no claim upon him for candour and veracity; but who, so far from having laboured to cultivate these, or any other virtues in his mind, is continually debasing and perverting him under a system of slavery, which must in its own effects tend to destroy every embryo of moral sentiment. He has yet another fault:—he will abscond and conceal himself in the mountains, to evade an unremitting series of drudgery, which is coercively imposed upon him, which he has barely the needful intervals of rest to relieve, and in which there is no animating principle of reward and encouragement to cheer and to alleviate. Hence to his master he is frequently a robber and deceiver; but he is rarely so depraved as to plunder his fellow-sufferers, or to be treacherous to his friend or companion. They who consider that the actions of men, in a rude and uncivilized state, will generally be squared by the treatment they receive from others, and behold our African, precluded



cluded as he is from the advantage of any moral improvement, and ignorant of the refinements of a beneficent religion, which directs us to return good for evil, will be prepared by the dictates of reason as well as of humanity, to judge favourably even of his faults. They will discover that they are neither unnatural, unjustifiable, nor other than may be in consequence expected; and they will find cause to be surprized at the integrity and sentiment, which frequently prevail in his intercourse with his fellow-slaves.

Let us then endeavour for a while to set all unreasonable prejudices aside, all the vanities of a fair outside, and of an understanding stored with ideas, which more frequently contribute to mere amusement, than to the only valuable purpose of improvement in rational piety and virtue. And if, in the propensity of mankind to evil, we frequently perceive instances in improved society, where great abilities and much refinement of education, have only  
served

served to render vicious characters more conspicuous; what cause then have we not to regard with compassion and remorse, the errors of an ignorant slave, who has been perverted in the school of depravity? If we were to take our children from their mother's breasts, and commit them to the care of galley-slaves, or of convicts, the voice of nature would cry aloud within us, that we were forming monsters of depravity and wickedness: and all those idle opinions which spring from the natural vanity of mankind, attributing to certain human beings, who have been fostered in the arms of art, of luxury and pride, a natural pre-eminence and purity above the rest of their fellow-creatures, would be silenced and confuted. Yet such is the culture and the care to which we usher the friendless and unfortunate slave, before we can charge him with any other crime than that of being obnoxious to our power. We introduce him among those accustomed to a slavery from which all mental improvement is precluded, in which an allotment  
of

of the coarsest food and cloathing is all the reward, and the dread of the whip and the chain the only instigation to the performance of duty. It may perhaps be argued, that the parent's duty towards his children differs from that of a master towards his slaves; but this subject will never be properly understood until we have sufficient candour to confess, that though *distant*, they are not *dissimilar*; and that the faithful discharge of the latter is, *at least*, equally indispensable in the determination of conscience with that of the former. Indeed, the existence of a slave is more absolutely under the controul of the master, than that of a child under his parent; with this difference in the origin of that controul: That children are a natural good, the consequence of an union ordained by our Creator for our happiness, and the propagation of the species. If the parent exerts his authority over them improperly and unjustly, he abuses a *right*; but he does not create an original and active *wrong*. He is not more than half so wicked as he who  
enlaves

enslaves his fellow-creature, and afterwards neglects or oppresses him ; for slavery is in itself an artificial evil, introduced by the imperfect state of mankind ; and where it is totally deficient in beneficent qualities, it becomes in the highest degree criminal and unjust. If it must be tolerated, the only justification it can meet with before the tribunal of religion and morality, is where a relation of a liberal and affectionate tendency is established by the master, as a principle of conduct which is to govern him towards his slaves ; and where, as a compensation for the time, the labour, in short, the existence of the latter, the former considers himself bound to promote his improvement and happiness. It must also be further observed, that though in both the preceding instances, the *duty* commences with him who is in possession of the *authority* ; yet where there is a neglect on the part of the superior in the discharge of that duty, a very material difference must be expected in the conduct and behaviour of each of the subjected : for nature demands

from the child a certain degree of affection and obedience even towards the worst of parents; whereas, in the artificial relation of slavery, which nature disowns and rejects, there is no other principle to impose love and obedience on the part of the slave, than a previous attention to his happiness and improvement on the part of the master. It is therefore evident, that so long as there is a total inattention to the proper discharge of the master's duty, it is in the highest degree unphilosophical and unreasonable to anticipate a degrading sentence against the talents and the virtues of an human being, of whom we are entirely ignorant until we subject him to our yoke, and disseminate those baneful seeds in his disposition, the natural produce of which he necessarily returns to us.

But it is now time to advert to the condition of the Creolian negro slave, and to bestow one or two cursory observations upon that trivial difference, which can be discovered between the African and him.

The

The fate of this last then is certainly, in some instances, less severe than that of the former; yet it is by no means sufficiently meliorated to effect any striking distinction in his favour, except in mere external appearance. He is, indeed, generally exempt from the pangs of being torn from his kindred and his native land, by those he does not know, to be borne he knows not whither. He feels not that barbarity, severity, and injustice, which the African becomes subject to, at the instant he is secured to be brought to a market. He knows none of that anxious and painful suspense, which many of them are under concerning the lot which awaits them, when they are exposed to sale in a slave-yard. He does not experience a cruel separation from those he is attached to, on arriving among a people with whose language he is unacquainted, and where he has not a friend to commiserate or share in his distress. In lieu of these afflictions, he has the hard advantage of being born and brought up beneath the trammels of that slavery to which he is destined;

destined ; and of learning, at an early period of life, that his existence is devoted to labour, without reward ; and to exertions, not to be repaid by confidence or affection. No generous germ of sentiment is suffered to make its appearance in his mind. The inattention and rigour of the system pursued towards him destroy it in its embryo. Hence the parent often treats the child with neglect ; the child regards the parent with indifference. The male unites with the female for the convenience of a drudge ; the female to the male to share the profits of his dishonesty. They connect without affection, and they part without regret, to make some other choice which caprice or convenience may dictate. All their little leisure is engrossed by cares for their bodily sustenance ; and in the present system to which they are subjected, there is neither a foundation laid for, nor room to erect an idea of, a moral duty ; nor of fostering and encouraging a natural obligation. The difference, therefore, between the African and Creolian slave appears to be simply this to  
an

an attentive observer. The Creolian has the most art and ingenuity, but the \* African the most natural principle. The Creolian is the most handy and expert at his business; but the African is the most affectionate father; the most constant husband, and the truest friend. The reason of this distinction is evident: the principles and affections of the former are subdued and perverted from his infancy; while the latter continues to retain a larger share of those which he received from nature, and which had been cherished in that greater, if not absolute, liberty, which he enjoyed in his own country.

Ye impartial West Indians! for many of you there are who have candour to

\* The constant, laborious field negro, who attaches himself to one wife, and to his little hut and spot of ground upon the plantation, is usually found among the Africans: and as negroes of this description are the very sinews of an estate; nay, indeed, are frequently obliged to make up by their toil for the deficiencies of idlers and runaways, it is matter of great regret, that they are not distinguished and rewarded.

confess



confess the defects of the present system of slavery, and sensibility to lament them; will you say that I have delineated this little sketch with an unfaithful pencil? Or that in the present relation between yourselves and your slaves, there exists any of those qualities which are indispensably necessary to make them a good and a happy people?

Such, when we first become acquainted with him, and such, when he is inured to our yoke, being the outlines of the character and conduct of this forlorn outcast of nature and society; it follows, that we must endeavour, with equal justice, to scrutinize the general scope of our own actions, blessed as we are with freedom, enlightened by science, and with the purest pattern of moral excellence continually open to our observation, in the sacred character of the Founder of our religion. These are the invaluable treasures which Providence has set before us; and it is worth while to consider to what purposes we apply them,

so

so as to manifest our gratitude to the giver, and to establish a claim to that distinction, which we have assumed above the uninstructed part of mankind. Our freedom, then, we abuse by trampling upon the rights of men who inhabit a fourth part of the globe; depriving them of their natural and inherent privileges, and giving them nothing in return but a bondage rigorous and oppressive, to which affection, religion, morality, and government, are equally and totally strangers. Science, which is only estimable so far as it prepares and conducts us to contemplate the great Author of our existence; and thence to reform and purify our minds, becomes, in our possession, to use the language of Milton,

“ Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy :”

directed as it is to the mere gratification of curiosity; or to the less venial purposes of promoting luxury, or encouraging some favourite passion. Far from following the example of him, whose life (to say nothing of his divine mission) was an unremitted course

course of piety and benevolence. We are continually engaged in some paltry scheme of interest, of sensuality, or of ambition ; as if these were the only pursuits we were designed for, and this state of existence the utmost boundary of our being. Even the best of us is comparatively most unworthy and imperfect ; and though from our improved state of society, we excel the African in the restraint of those disorderly passions, which will break forth under his loose and rude condition ; yet how frequently do we degrade ourselves below him by the commission of crimes, for which his ignorance, and the habits he has been accustomed to, might plead an excuse ? Is it then for such creatures as we are, that we presume Almighty wisdom should deviate from the harmony and regularity of his works, to form a race of beings out of the order of nature ; endowed with rational faculties, but without the power of acquiring virtue, that they might be the more convenient and subservient engines

engines to our avarice, our vanity, and our ease?

However negative this mode of reasoning is admitted to be, there is none which is more effectual to produce conviction in the mind : for it is a sound maxim in logick, that, if what we conceive terminates in absurdity and contradiction, we must abandon it as false and inadmissible. Now, it is as impossible for us to suppose, consistently with our impressions of the benevolence and goodness of the Deity, that he has formed a rational being under the inevitable destiny of his being incapable of what we call *principle* in his conduct, as it is for us to infer, consistently with our notions of his wisdom, that God should have created such a being merely for our use and convenience. But how do the apologists of our present system of slavery surmount this objection? By evading an argument which they cannot contradict, under an insinuation that it is presumptuous in man to attempt

attempt to fathom, or, in other words, to reason upon the intentions of Providence in the creation of the African. But this is a weak and desperate resource for the support of a mistaken cause; since it will not palliate our want of benevolence and of justice, in neglecting to attempt, at least, the improvement of a being, between whom and ourselves there is a most intimate resemblance, whatever may be our doubts with respect to the extent of his faculties and talents; and whom we have so effectually subjected to our power, that he cannot derive that improvement unless through our encouragement and assistance. Independent however of this defect, it is an insinuation which is erroneous in its principle: for, so far are we from being presumptuous when we reason with awe and with humility, upon those parts of this STUPENDOUS WHOLE, which fall within the reach of our observation, that it is one of the principal duties of our existence to trace them from their Almighty Author, in a manner  
suitable

suitable to the impressions we have received of his divine wisdom and goodness. The fact is, that we are then only presumptuous, when we are doubtful of their excellence, or impute them to weak and unworthy motives; and there is no medium to be adopted in the question at present before us. We must either conceive, *that the Deity in creating the African an intelligent being, has formed him with a capacity for virtue, agreeable to his own invariable and eternal attributes of wisdom and benevolence: or else, that in creating the African an intelligent being, he designed him to be altogether vicious and miserable, upon principles of caprice, of cruelty, and injustice.* Now, which of these opinions is consistent with the moral beauty and order of creation, as well as with our own hopes of happiness in a future state; and which is inconsistent with both, as well as tending to dissolve all distinction between virtue and vice, and all the bands of society, we need not hesitate to determine. Nor is there any reason to apprehend.

apprehend, that even our most mistaken ideas of self-interest can so far pervert our understandings, as to seduce us to depart from those pure principles of theology, which have so long prevailed, and which are still increasing and extending themselves through all the enlightened world, in order that we may foster so horrid and baneful an idea, as *that the human race in Africa were created to be an object of the aversion and anger of the Deity, and of the avarice and rapine of mankind.* Thus far the subject has been considered chiefly in a theological point of view, a principle of reasoning, which however unfashionable and contrary to the spirit of the reigning philosophy, ought not to be despised or rejected, when we reflect that the sacred impression from which all theology proceeds, has never failed to communicate itself forcibly, in some shape or other, to every rational and susceptible mind.

Opinions,

Opinions, on any subject, however, are of but little force or utility, until they have been proved to bear investigation. They are therefore tried by certain acknowledged standards of right, and of truth, that their proper value may be discovered and impressed upon them. Of these standards, in every question which concerns religion and morals, those inferences which we have been accustomed to admit of the goodness and wisdom of the Deity; and that sense which we entertain of an original equity, antecedent and paramount to any of the artificial restraints of society, may be considered as the chief; and perhaps it forms part of the condition, and of the felicity of beings superior to ourselves, that these are sufficient for their guide. But man is evidently too imperfect a creature, either to deduce such inferences, or to enjoy such a sense pure and unobscured; and therefore we require something more; something better adapted to our grosser conceptions, to be effectual to the purpose of producing conviction. It is not  
then



then an opinion, *that a negro is created with the power of conscientiously discharging his duty towards God and man, however founded upon natural and revealed religion, and conformable to our notions of supreme and universal justice, that will be deemed sufficient to vindicate his claim to instruction and greater care at our hands; but it will be further necessary to corroborate this opinion with certain proofs which have resulted from experience; and we must now proceed to effect this, as well as to introduce some relative and obvious remarks.*

It has already been remarked, how unavailing the attempt has hitherto been, to ascertain the limits of negro genius and understanding. It appears indeed to be a question so involved in obscurity, and so little likely to be followed by an unequivocal discovery of the truth, that it is at best but useless to pursue the inquiry; nor would such a pursuit be of much importance in the present instance, where the object of discussion

sion is simply the confirmation and proof of the justice of an hypothesis, *That a negro is capable of being a moral agent*. His claim to the title of a *rational* one is clear and incontrovertible, from the evidence to support it, unless in the opinion of those whom prejudice has precluded from the power of being convinced. The Letters of Ignatius Sancho; the Latin compositions of Francis Williams; and the more natural and ingenious productions of Phillis Wheatley, a slave whose mind was cramped by her condition, and whose only tutor was the strength of her own faculties; each of these has already furnished a publick and ample testimony of, at least, as considerable a portion of mental ability, as falls to the lot of mankind in general. And though it is hardly necessary to quote further instances, we may also notice the account which a learned and ingenious writer \* has lately published of the arithmetical powers displayed by an un-

\* Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia.

instructed African, in one of the American states; nor will it be improper to consider the clear and connected evidence which free and civilized negroes have been known to give at publick trials, in the courts of justice in the West-Indies, which professional men, who attend those courts, must in many instances recollect. Now while these qualities and powers are sufficient to vindicate the claim of their respective possessors to complete rationality, they also vindicate that of the whole negro race; for it would be highly absurd and unreasonable to infer, that a few individuals should be formed with particular distinctions, and that the residue of the same people, should be an inferior order in creation. Indeed, neither philosophy or common sense would warrant such a strained and far-fetched conclusion. But it would be needless to enlarge upon this topick of discussion: for as *reason* would be useless without *free-will*, and as *free-will* is the power of making our own election between *good* and *evil*, the idea of a rational agent is inseparable

inseparable from that of a *moral* one. Every argument, therefore, and every proof which can be adduced to place the African in the rank of the *latter*, will equally tend to support his pretensions to that of the *former*. As introductory, however, to such arguments and proofs, it may perhaps be expedient to endeavour to remove one obstacle out of the African's way, by a few impartial reflections on that very trite and frequent observation among us, *That a negro is rarely possessed of a sense of gratitude.*

If gratitude were a quality existing in perfection among mankind, and if we were not accustomed so to value our own claims upon the attention of others, as seldom to receive a sufficient impression of those benefits which are conferred upon us, we should still have to inquire whether such favours as are usually bestowed upon a negro slave, would beget in ourselves, in a similar condition, a greater or more lasting sense of them, than that which he discovers : and in order  
to

to make this inquiry fairly, we must endeavour to suppose ourselves in the African's situation. We must not picture to our imagination, some poor and friendless orphan, received and cherished by a charitable and benevolent protector, instructed in his duties to God and to mankind, and brought up in the habits of honest industry; but an human being deprived of freedom, contrary to his own will and consent, and perceiving the whole labours of his existence devoted to the profit and advantage of a self-created superior, who acknowledges no other relation towards him than that of the power which he has assumed. Could we conceive ourselves to be thus circumstanced, we should at once conclude, that nothing but the most invariable and decided attention to our interest, improvement and happiness, could possibly render the person, to whose authority we were subjugated, an object of our permanent gratitude. We should feel that it was not the capricious smile, or trifling donation, bestowed upon the slave in some favourable moment,

moment, when the master's heart was dilated by sensations of pleasure, that could elevate principle, which had been subdued by oppression, or restore understanding perverted into cunning. Every slave is indeed occasionally liable to receive favours of this nature ; and it may as generally be remarked, that every slave receives them with all the gratitude they deserve. The " Thank you, " master; God bless you, master !" which the slave pronounces, while his heart is warmed with the indulgence he has met with, appears to be a full return for that indulgence itself. If his sensation of gratitude be but momentary, the boon which is conferred upon him, is inadequate to a more durable impression, and the impulse which renders him an object of favour, is as short lived and transitory as his sense of it. But let us proceed to search more minutely into the nature and quality of those favours bestowed upon the African, which are presumed to merit such a strong and lasting sense of gratitude.

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Do they bear any resemblance or proportion to those essential benefits, which lay a person, who is highly assisted and relieved, under a permanent obligation to another, who has served him with much pains and expense? Do they even extend to what would be but equitable concessions on the master's part; and dare the African, for instance, ask to have his condition improved, so as that he may enjoy, without molestation, any of those comforts, advantages and rights,\* which are open to the meanest free person in the colony? No: but he may beg for a pint of corn, rice, or flour, when he is pinched by hunger; he may solicit an afternoon, or perhaps a day, to attend the funeral of some near re-

\* Among these may be classed the *right* of property, that those few profits which a slave can derive from his industry, should not be taken from him upon bare suspicion, on account of offences committed by unknown persons; the *right* to a certain fixed and due proportion of time, to be appropriated to the slave's own use and advantage; the *right* to be fairly tried before he is sentenced to severe punishments. All these are but fair and equitable claims, which, however, are not admitted under the present system of slavery.

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lation or friend; he may occasionally beg for a day to draw his † cassava, or to thatch his house; for which latter purpose he may obtain a sufficient quantity of ‡ woula, brought by the gang, to thatch it with; and a bottle of rum and a little melasses to give to drink to those who assist him. These, and similar bounties to these, are all that he can venture to look up to; and even for these he must not be very frequent in his applications. These too are often diminished in value, by the manner in which they are bestowed, which but rarely partakes of that benevolence and cheerfulness, with which the moderate wishes of a good slave, should be even anticipated, if known to his master. It is easy to be perceived, that favours thus limited and thus conferred, are but little adapted to inspire and to cherish such a virtue as gratitude.

† A root which is manufactured into a kind of bread.

‡ The leaf which grows from the root and sides of the sugar cane, and which answers the purpose of straw for thatching.

But



But we must carry our inquiries still further, and make some observations upon the conduct of slaves towards those masters, who are termed good-natured, indolent men. Characters of this description have frequently been quoted as proofs of the ingratitude of the negro race; although it is obvious to common sense, and confirmed by universal experience, that men who concede indulgences, merely to get rid of importunity, and relax in all order and discipline, to save

little momentary pain to their feelings, must naturally expect disregard and contempt from those who are subjected to their authority, even where they are highly advanced in civilization and knowledge. And the reason of a return apparently so ungrateful, is evident enough. It universally requires a marked design and attention to bestow a favour upon an individual, to excite in him a complete sense of gratitude; but these qualities must be still more apparent and systematic in the benefactor, before they can produce the same effect upon any body of men, who depend upon his judgment

ment and conduct to be governed in such a manner as may best contribute to their general good. Without this exertion, we may indeed frequently *indulge*, but rarely can *essentially serve* our fellow creatures. Indulgence also to some, is often injustice to others, particularly where those gratifications are bestowed upon importunity, which ought to be reserved as the reward of merit; and history so strongly corroborates the truth of these observations, that we have rarely found the easy, good-natured, and indolent ruler of a people, to be possessed of their genuine affection and veneration. Indeed the administration of government in the hands of such men, is much too partial and negligent, to beget attachment and gratitude; nor can we conceive why an ignorant African, who stands so much in need of system and perseverance, to improve and to make him happy, should so far differ from the general character of mankind, as to make an unreasonable return of gratitude towards one, who, though he may have indulged him with some accidental gratifications, has never made  
his

his interest and happiness the object of his pains and attention.

So far then, examining the subject negatively, there is no reason to draw a conclusion favourable to the common remark, “ *That a negro is rarely possessed of a sense of gratitude.*” Let us now proceed to positive examples and argument, and observe, “ *Whether negroes have been known to manifest a proper degree of gratitude, in such cases as may naturally be supposed to demand it ?*”

To enter then into the stile of narrative, the first general example which I have to quote, is as follows: There is a resident proprietor, with whom I have the pleasure of being acquainted, liberally educated, humane, intelligent, and industrious. He has sensibly and benevolently considered, that it is the first and most important part of every planter’s duty and interest, to be careful of the welfare and comfort of his slaves. He sedulously applies himself to this laudable purpose.

purpose. He not only gives to his slaves an allowance of food and clothing equal to what is given by the most liberal proprietors; but also has distributed among them, certain properties of fertile provision-ground, from which they derive many supplies and conveniences of life. But it is not the bare distribution of the provision-ground that is of so much utility as the judicious means he has adopted to encourage his slaves to cultivate them; the time which he occasionally allots them for that purpose; the pains which he has taken to render the product of the land both profitable and secure to them; and his own constant inspection and observation. In short, without relaxing in that authority which is necessary to be adhered to for the preservation of order and good government, he treats them with an unusual care and consideration to their real good and advantage. The consequence of this attention to his duty as a master is, that he has a tribe of cheerful, contented, and laborious slaves, who are at all times willing to exert them-

selves in his service; among whom the lash of the whip is very rarely applied, and such a character as a runaway has not been known for years. It is worth while to mention also, that several of the best and most able slaves upon the plantation had been notorious runaways before this gentleman bought it, and indeed were then absent, but came in immediately when they heard that he had become their master, and have never since absconded. Now, to what principle is this general good behaviour of slaves to be ascribed, differing so widely as it does from the conduct of those who are ill treated and neglected? Is it any thing more than fair and reasonable to attribute it, in a great degree, to a sense of their master's consideration for their welfare, which has established an impression of duty on their part, exciting an adequate return of gratitude?

The foregoing is an instance of the behaviour of a certain tribe of plantation slaves in one of our sugar colonies; slaves who

who are yet uninstructed in the principles of religion and morality, and yet remaining in their native ignorance, except so far as they may have acquired some distinctions from the attentions, which have been already recited, of a benevolent and considerate master. In addition to this I may be permitted to intimate, by the way, from the conviction of my own immediate experience, that the gratitude and affection of negro slaves toward their master, will increase in proportion to his care for their improvement and welfare. To support, however, this principle still farther, as well as to corroborate the present hypothesis, I will proceed to mention certain instances of gratitude and rectitude of heart, selected from among negroes who are either free, or considerably improved in a state of slavery; only observing, lest these instances should appear to be but few and singular, that, on the one hand, I have not been sufficiently disengaged from other cares, to devote my time to more extensive or particular inquiries; and on the other, that the number

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ber of negroes who partake of civilization and liberty in our sugar colonies is very small in proportion to that of the ignorant and enslaved: besides, so seldom are the mental faculties of negroes cultivated in our sugar colonies, and so much are they under the influence of their abject condition, and its consequent vicious habits, that *one* instance of virtue among them should, in candour, be admitted as equal to *an hundred* among those, to whom freedom is an inviolable birthright, and religion and morality the regular and common principles of education.

The tragical fate of the African rivals and friends, with that of the object of their mutual affection, which are related at length in the Spectator, and remarked by Mr. Ramsay in his Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of Slaves, and the no less tragical and affecting story of Quashi (as related by Mr. Ramsay in the same essay) though no particular proofs of gratitude, must yet be noticed as undeniable instances  
of

of that \* *delicacy of passion*, which however unfortunate to its possessors, is an infallible criterion of *complete humanity*. But the character of JOSEPH RACHEL as also described in the Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of Slaves, exhibits an unequivocal instance of negro gratitude. It now becomes my part to instance another JOSEPH equally grateful with himself.

JOSEPH HERBERT was formerly a negro slave belonging to an aged lady of the island of Nevis; his fidelity and good behaviour rendered him deserving of his freedom, and her circumstances were so low and reduced as to render it necessary for her to provide for her future support. She had no other means of making this provision than by setting her faithful slave at liberty, and depending upon him for her own

\* If Mr. Hume, who has written with much ingenuity upon the *delicacy of taste and passion*, had been acquainted with these different instances of *delicacy of passion* in negroes, he would have found cause to have been doubtful at least, of an opinion concerning them, which appears to have been too hastily formed.

maintenance,



maintenance. This she accordingly did; and in so doing, she has never been deceived or disappointed. He built her an house in the town of Charlestown in the island of Nevis; and has ever since continued to serve her with the most dutiful and unremitting attention; even anticipating her wants, and providing her with little delicacies, so far as the small profits of his trade, which is that of a cooper, will enable him to purchase them. She is still living, though very old and infirm, and he has never diminished in his care and respect towards her. There are also similar instances of grateful behaviour among individual negroes in that island, which though less conspicuous, would yet be sufficient to prove to any unprejudiced mind, that a negro is not deficient in a sense of gratitude.

But it is not in our sugar colonies, where there is so seldom any principled relation between master and slave, or any essential benefit conferred by the former, that it  
 stands

stances of gratitude, attachment, and reſtitude among negroes, are to be frequently expected. Theſe are ſuch as the maſter does not look for, and indeed he muſt be ſenſible, upon an impartial review of the preſent ſyſtem of ſlavery, that he has no title to claim them. The following facts are taken from a colony where ſlavery wears a milder and more beneficent aſpect; and they are offered not only as a proof of gratitude in negro ſlaves, but alſo of integrity and fidelity:—a proof ſufficient as well to lead us to a juſt and favourable concluſion in the negro's behalf ſo far as concerns the quality of gratitude, as alſo to vindicate and confirm the truth of the preſent hypotheſis in general.

“ Some years ago, three negroes, the  
 “ property of an inhabitant of the iſland  
 “ of Bermudas, were taken on board  
 “ a veſſel, which being detected in  
 “ ſome illicit trade, was captured by  
 “ the Portland ſhip of war. The veſ-  
 “ ſel being condemned as a lawful prize,  
 “ the

“ the negroes had also become liable to in-  
 “ cur a similar sentence ; but, though their  
 “ owner had forfeited his own right to  
 “ them as a property, yet the benevolent  
 “ and equitable sentiments of the com-  
 “ mander of the Portland, would not ad-  
 “ mit of a proceeding against the slaves,  
 “ which appeared to him to be repugnant  
 “ to every principle of humanity and jus-  
 “ tice. Perhaps he was well aware, that  
 “ one of the most horrid and iniquitous  
 “ evils of slavery is, that the most valuable  
 “ and improved slave has not a right re-  
 “ served to him more than the most worth-  
 “ less ; that he is equally liable to be sold,  
 “ and to be separated from his family, his  
 “ little property, and his friends, for the  
 “ misfortune or folly of his owner ; and  
 “ that he is frequently thus doomed to  
 “ be the innocent victim of the impru-  
 “ dence, or ill success of another. At all  
 “ events, he took the necessary measures to  
 “ prevent his captives from being sold,  
 “ and employed them immediately on  
 “ board the Portland, where such were  
 “ their activity, skill, and good conduct,  
 “ that

“ that they were soon distinguished, and  
 “ indeed rewarded ; a mark of merit which  
 “ ought of itself to be sufficient to raise  
 “ this now abject and degraded being, a  
 “ negro slave, in the scale of our estimation  
 “ and opinion. They continued in  
 “ service a considerable time, still conducting  
 “ themselves with equal propriety,  
 “ till at length the time approached for  
 “ the ship’s return to England, and she  
 “ was refitted at Antigua for that purpose,  
 “ when their patron and benefactor addressed  
 “ them to the following effect :—  
 “ *My lads, you have now been with me for*  
 “ *some time, and have uniformly conducted*  
 “ *yourselves so much to my satisfaction, that*  
 “ *I have resolved to allow you your full*  
 “ *proportion of wages and of prize money,*  
 “ *which shall be paid until the present hour ;*  
 “ *but it is nevertheless my wish that you*  
 “ *should proceed with me in the ship to Eng-*  
 “ *land, by doing which you will not only ac-*  
 “ *quire a further profit to yourselves, but*  
 “ *will also possess yourselves of that freedom,*  
 “ *which you appear to be well deserving of.*  
 “ The negroes listened to his proposal with  
 “ attention

“ attention and respect, but did not hesi-  
 “ tate a moment in adopting their resolu-  
 “ tion. *They acknowledged the obligations*  
 “ *they were under to his humanity and gene-*  
 “ *rosity; but told him that they should not think*  
 “ *themselves justified were they to forsake a*  
 “ *good master, whose support in some measure*  
 “ *depended upon their labour, and who relied*  
 “ *upon their fidelity to return to him, and*  
 “ *their honesty to bring with them the money*  
 “ *they had earned: they therefore requested*  
 “ *permission to go back to Bermudas, with*  
 “ *the wages and prize money which had been*  
 “ *bestowed upon them. It is almost need-*  
 “ *less to add, that the same upright and*  
 “ *benevolent sentiments, which had in-*  
 “ *duced the Commander of the Portland*  
 “ *to make an offer so evidently to their ad-*  
 “ *vantage, would dictate to him to comply*  
 “ *with a request, founded upon prin-*  
 “ *ciples so deserving of admiration and*  
 “ *applause.*”

The *moral sense* has been well defined to  
 be *an impression of the beauty and excellence*  
*of virtue, abstracted from any consideration*

*to its consequences.* Where then has it been found to exist with more vigour and purity than in the instance which has been just related, in which three of the African race, actuated by motives of duty, instantly determined to prefer a state of slavery, and a surrender of gains, which they had acquired with labour and hazard, to the enjoyments of freedom and *comparative* opulence. But upon inquiry, it has been acknowledged by several native Bermudians, that instances of similar integrity among negroes are not uncommon in that colony. In Bermudas, it is frequently a practice with the proprietors of slaves bred to the sea, to suffer them to hire themselves upon any voyage which is agreeable to their own inclinations; and it is not unusual for them to be absent even for years, according to the employment which they happen to find in foreign ports, and faithfully to remit their wages to their masters, who are under no suspicions or apprehensions of their deserting them. The difference, however, between the slaves of Bermudas and those of our sugar colonies is at once palpable to the most superficial observer.

observer. The former, as may be discovered in their gesture, their looks, and their whole deportment, are an active, confident, and intelligent people, betraying none of those squalid symptoms of dejection and depravity, which are in general too visible in the countenances and manners of the latter. The male slaves in Bermudas are either skilful and laborious mechanicks, or hardy and expert seamen; and the females are no less ingenious, than honest and diligent in domestick employments; having given instances of \*uncommon dexterity and nicety in many branches of household manufacture, and being frequently entrusted with the care of the provisions and stores belonging to the family. The causes of so evident a distinction between the slaves of Bermudas and those of the sugar colonies, it is most probable are these:—In Bermudas the slave is not only the object of

\* A person whose veracity the author can depend upon, has informed him, that a negro housemaid in Bermudas has pulled the cotton from the stalk, picked, carded, and spun it; and afterwards knitted it into a pair of mens stockings of such delicate fineness and texture, that they could be drawn through a wedding ring.

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the master's *authority*, but of his *affection* also. In the sugar colonies he is too generally considered as the object of *authority* alone. In Bermudas, where the slave is regarded as a part of the family, the master considers himself as his *patron and protector*, as well as his *proprietor*. In the sugar colonies, the master is accustomed to look upon himself as the *proprietor* only; and hence the slave being rarely regarded otherwise than as a *property*, almost every act of the master's, which consults his benefit or convenience, is chiefly governed by a view to his preservation, upon this narrow and contracted principle. Finally, in Bermudas there are habits of religion, and of plainness and simplicity of manners, which reduce that immense distance between the master and slave so remarkable in the sugar colonies; and bringing them both to worship at the same temple, before the common Maker and all-bounteous Master of us all, remind them of the natural affinity between them: and hence that patriarchal relation has been established in Bermudas, which, if slavery be admitted, ought invariably to  
subsis



subsist between the master and his slave ;—a relation in which *authority* should be controuled and softened by *affection* \* : the former keeping the slave in sufficient subordination and dependence ; and the latter promoting those constant acts of kindness and beneficence on the part of the master, which  
will

\* I have had several opportunities of observing how far this quality of affection towards slaves is sufficient of itself to secure their attachment and fidelity, and to excite in them notions of duty and rectitude greater than can be entertained by those, who are regarded with contempt, and treated with neglect and indifference ; but in particular in the course of a late visit to the Bahama islands. It is a characteristick of the old settlers among those islands, who live in a stile of great simplicity, that they treat their slaves as if they were their children ; as it is of their slaves in return, that they manifest the same attachment to their owners as they would to a parent. An instance of this kind made a strong impression upon me, on an interview at which I happened to be present at the island of Great Haneaga, between an old Bahamian, who was cruising in quest of shipwrecks (at once to profit by and relieve the distresses of his fellow-creatures) and the crews of two vessels which belonged to him. These crews consisted chiefly of about fourteen or fifteen active, robust, animated and intelligent negroes, between whom and their old master there passed such cordial congratulations and inquiries, as could not fail to make an impression  
upon

will invariably produce their own good effects upon the mind of any rational and susceptible being.

It may, however, still be urged that a *sense of self-interest* on the part of the proprietor in the sugar colonies, will be sufficient to compensate for other defects, and to secure good treatment to the slave : but to me it appears that the weakness of this argument has never been fully adverted to ; for when we proceed to contemplate this sense of self-interest, in the manner in which it exists in different minds, we shall find that it is seldom capable of pro-

upon any person disposed to contemplate the best affections of human nature, void of art and disguise. He afterwards enlarged to me upon the attachment and fidelity of several of them, in terms of the warmest eulogium. I must not omit to mention here an instance of negro docility and industry, which came under my observation at the island of Providence, one of the Bahama islands. At the house where I lodged, there was a negro girl of about eight or ten years old, who was learning to read and to work, and who did all the common business of the house, with an intelligence and alertness equal to that of any child of a white complexion.

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ducing any meliorating effects, without the assistance of some superior principles.

In fact, it is one of the infirmities of our nature, and the causes of our misery in this probationary state of existence, that, however we may be capable of discerning, we certainly do not always follow our true interest. A just sense of self-interest invariably pursued would lead to nothing but to virtue and to happiness; but to suppose such a pursuit, without any deviation from it, is to suppose a degree of perfection, which, though we may and ought to strive for, in order to prepare ourselves for a better world, we yet cannot attain in this. Without, however, proceeding to consider *self-interest* in this exalted sense, or to give it any other definition than those who assert its efficacy as a prevailing and controuling principle, would annex to it; that is, considering it *as an attachment to the accumulation and preservation of property*, it must be observed, that even *this sense of self-interest* is frequently suspended, and overwhelmed by our other passions; nay, is  
often

often thwarted most by that very passion which means most to promote it. To apply this to the present subject : it is by no means uncommon in the West Indies, to meet with a master of an avaricious and miserly disposition, who suffers his slaves to pine away in hunger and nakedness, and exacts more labour from them than their constitutions can bear, to the diminution of their numbers and strength, and of course to the injury of that *self-interest*, which it is his principal aim to advance. With whom then is this *sense of self-interest* to be discovered, existing so completely as to form a regular, orderly, and uncontrollable rule of conduct ? Is it with the generality of owners of slaves, who regard their interest, it is true ; but who do not regard it further than as it is conducive to their gratification and enjoyment ? Certainly not : for with characters of this description, *the sense of self-interest*, according to that definition which has been already annexed to it, is only of temporary continuance, occupying the mind indeed in its turn like other passions, but in its turn overborne and suspended.

pended. How then is *this sense of self-interest* to secure good treatment and attention to the slave, when anger, aversion, disgust, disappointment, or the pursuit of some predominant pleasure, have deposed it and usurped its station in the mind? And that it is frequently thus deposed is indubitable from the history of mankind throughout all ages; the gratification of those evil passions to which human nature is prone, having universally prevailed; and being as universally inconsistent with *this sense of self-interest*. It is not likely, therefore, that a principle, which is so little to be depended upon in man's general conduct through life, shall be uniformly exerted towards those who are immediately exposed to our passions and our power: nor is any such an absurd consequence supported by experience. At present the master possesses his slave, as he does every other species of property; all of which he is tenacious indeed to retain, but which he holds subject to all the abuses of capricious humour, and obnoxious to the change of every fluctuating passion. *This sense of self-interest* then,

which

which has been held out as a counterbalance to the defects of that slavery which exists in our sugar colonies, has no regular and general prevalency adequate to the controul and melioration of a system, so narrow and contracted in its purposes; so liable to be abused; and so little limited in its authority. A proper degree of attention towards slaves can therefore only be expected from those, who are virtuous and considerate enough to controul their authority over him by qualities of a more exalted and liberal tendency, *than an attachment to the accumulation and preservation of property.*

Here then we are enabled, I conceive, to come to a fair and undeniable conclusion. That there is a system of slavery established in our sugar colonies, in itself highly arbitrary and oppressive, and void of every moral relation between master and slave, is a fact which cannot be disputed by its warmest and hardiest apologists. Indeed, they have already impliedly assented to it, by asserting that it is in a great measure, if not sufficiently checked and controuled, by a certain *sense of self-interest*;

*interest*; or, in other words, *an attachment to the accumulation and preservation of property*; which, however, when duly considered, will be found either frequently to defeat its own purposes, or to act too partially and too rarely to produce any meliorating effects, of consequence enough to be noticed. When we proceed to consider the being, who is subjugated to this unprincipled authority; first, according to the most received and enlightened maxims of theology; and afterwards according to that propriety and rectitude of conduct, which he has exhibited in various instances; we have all the conviction which is necessary, that he is endowed by his Creator with a capacity for religious and moral improvement. When we consider him as an ignorant being, whose existence we have taken into our hands, and devoted to labour for our advantages, we must be equally convinced, that it is a duty which we owe to him, to our Creator, and to society, to contribute, by all judicious methods, to his improvement and happiness. Those, I apprehend, are such just deductions, that

that we may now go on to bestow a few considerations upon the means by which so desirable an object can be promoted or obtained.

It is the effect of human philosophy, that it inflates the soul with pride, and fills its votaries with high conceits of their own pre-eminence and ability. It is the principle of the Christian religion, when rightly understood (and were it for this alone, it deserves to be celebrated above all other systems) that it teaches such a frail, imperfect creature as man, a needful lesson of self humiliation—a disposition to frown with severity upon his own faults, and to regard with compassion and tenderness the errors of his fellow-creatures. Now, somewhat of this virtue of humility is indispensably requisite, in the first instance, for the proprietor of slaves in our sugar colonies, to enable him to descend from that pinnacle of power, which he has usurped; to regard with benevolent affections that abject and forlorn being, a negro slave, who is now crouching at his  
“ feet;



feet; to raise him up, and to take an interest in his temporal and future welfare. Could this mild and beneficent quality once find its way to the heart, the foul and midnight mist of vicious custom and prejudice would quickly dissipate before it; and every proprietor, of common sense and goodness of heart, would soon conceive some plan by which improvement might be communicated, and all needful authority still upheld and preserved. Until, however, a more comprehensive scheme of reformation can be adopted, in which the legal powers of government and the goodwill of individuals may be led to co-operate, the following is suggested with deference, as simple, operative, and unexpensive.

“ Let every resident proprietor, who is  
 “ desirous of improving his slaves, be at the  
 “ pains to compose a strict, but humane  
 “ and judicious code of plantation laws for  
 “ their government; partaking of rewards  
 “ and punishments, in order to excite emu-  
 “ lation and enforce obedience. Let a  
 “ building be erected upon the plantation,  
 “ (which

“ (which may be done at an inconsider-  
 “ able expense) and let it be set apart as  
 “ the repository of the laws, the tribunal  
 “ of justice, and the seat of religious and  
 “ moral instruction. Here let the proprie-  
 “ tor make it a practice to attend regularly  
 “ on the Sabbaths, and at particular festi-  
 “ vals; and after delivering a short and  
 “ easy discourse of a religious and moral  
 “ tendency, for the instruction of his  
 “ slaves, let him make them acquainted  
 “ with the laws by which they are to be  
 “ governed, with the punishments which  
 “ they will invariably incur for the com-  
 “ mission of certain offences, and with the  
 “ rewards which will accrue to them for  
 “ certain instances of good behaviour. As  
 “ to the expense of such rewards, every  
 “ person who is acquainted with a West  
 “ India plantation, knows how easy it is  
 “ to reward a deserving slave without any  
 “ sensible expense to the proprietor. The  
 “ increase of the small stock, which most  
 “ proprietors raise for their tables, would  
 “ easily afford the distribution of a fowl, a  
 “ pig, or a kid at Christmas, according to  
 “ the

“ the merits of those who were entitled to  
 “ claim them ; and a gift of this nature  
 “ would not only be regarded as a valuable  
 “ treasure by the slave, but would become  
 “ still more important from the consider-  
 “ ations upon which it was given. In  
 “ short, this engine of rewards, in ju-  
 “ dicious hands, might be applied to a va-  
 “ riety of excellent purposes upon a West  
 “ India estate. It might be employed to en-  
 “ courage marriage and population ; to re-  
 “ ward honesty and fidelity ; to stimulate  
 “ to a spirit of industry ; and to distinguish  
 “ those who were most attentive to in-  
 “ struction. It would also form so obvious  
 “ a contrast to needful and indispensable  
 “ punishments, that the advantages of good  
 “ behaviour would become striking and  
 “ conspicuous ; whereas, the only benefit  
 “ which the slave derives from regular at-  
 “ tention to his duty, under his present  
 “ condition, is the mere negative one of not  
 “ incurring chastisement. These are only  
 “ cursory hints ; but upon the whole it  
 “ cannot be doubted, that the gradual in-  
 “ troduction of a system somewhat similar  
 “ to

“ to the foregoing, would soon diffuse  
 “ its meliorating qualities and effects. It  
 “ would at once promote the cause of re-  
 “ ligion and morality, so essential to the  
 “ present and future happiness of all men ;  
 “ —it would tend to establish a principled  
 “ relation between the master and slave,  
 “ while it rather confirmed than diminish-  
 “ ed the proper authority of the former ;—  
 “ it would add to the safety of the colo-  
 “ nies by securing the slave’s attachment ;—  
 “ and every rational impression of religion  
 “ must induce us to believe that it would  
 “ be followed with the blessing of Pro-  
 “ vidence.”

Already is the spirit of humanity towards  
 slaves gradually diffusing itself throughout  
 our sugar colonies, so far as respects lenity  
 and moderation of punishment. Unhap-  
 pily, however, the prejudices of the old  
 system still sufficiently prevail, to cause  
 every opinion which favours the slave’s  
 mental improvement and advancement, to  
 be considered in general, as romantick and  
 visionary ; and hence we may easily con-  
 clude

clude how obdurate has been the work of prejudice, and of habit, when so natural an object as the improvement of human nature, the apparent end of human existence, is deemed absurd and impracticable. Yet, why should not an experiment be tried from which no evil is likely to result, but which, on the contrary, promises to produce the most pleasing and satisfactory effects? If slaves be but little improved by it, yet will not that master of them be in every sense better and happier, who, looking down with complacency and benevolence, perhaps upon some hundreds of human beings, the labours of whose existence are devoted to his service, can say: “ I am endeavouring  
 “ to discharge my duty towards them, as  
 “ a man and a Christian. I am not only  
 “ their master, but also their benefactor,  
 “ their legislator, and instructor?” Further, as there are few pursuits in which the mind engages, which do not leave some tincture of their qualities behind them, what advantages even of worldly interest would not result to the proprietor, under the inculcation of those religious and moral precepts,

precepts, which are calculated to wean the heart from luxury and dissipation, and to cherish those habits of frugality and industry, which are the surest and the happiest means of wealth. In short, on whatever side we view the subject, it is equally obvious that every rational attempt for the improvement of slaves, and the melioration of the system of slavery, is pregnant with the most essential benefits. An *unprincipled* slavery, which has, in its own consequences, hardened the hearts, and corrupted the understandings of its supporters;—which has led to every thing that is irreligious, and to every thing that is immoral,—has hitherto been the scourge and the curse of our sugar colonies. From every measure tending to its reformation, we might anticipate the exertions of both publick and private virtue; the reform of those abuses and defects both in law and police, which now exist in the colonies; and a successful struggle against those difficulties under which they are at present labouring.

In the mean time, it is incumbent upon the mother country to consider how much her West India colonies require a fostering hand. That they form one of the sources of her commerce, her wealth and her revenue is indisputable; and while they are adverted to as an object of her taxation, restriction, and reform, they ought in equity and sound policy to be equally remembered as an object of her favours and accommodation. In particular, the mother country ought to take the lead, and to assist the sugar colonies in every sacrifice which humanity may require of them, for the melioration of the treatment of slaves; otherwise her regulations will be oppressive, and the principles of them disgraceful and suspicious. Now, such are the sentiments which at present prevail in the West Indies, that there are but few proprietors, who would not afford their slaves an ample allowance of food; but there are no means of procuring it upon any tolerable terms, especially among the smaller and less fertile islands: for no regular dependence can be placed upon raising a sufficient auxiliary stock

stock of ground provisions; and importations from the American states in British bottoms, are both inadequate and too much enhanced in price to hold forth any other than a resource precarious in itself, and beyond measure, expensive. Is it not therefore worthy the consideration of government, whether an importation confined to the articles of *Indian corn and peas only*, from the American states in their own bottoms, to the sugar colonies; and the exportation by the same bottoms of the rum received in barter, be not a measure which ought to be adverted to at this juncture for the accommodation of the planter, and the easier and more ample sustenance of slaves? The injury which our own navigation might receive from so partial an encroachment upon a trade, in which a great part of the seamen at present employed are negro slaves, would possibly be more than compensated by the facility with which we should obtain supplies of American seamen in case of future emergencies, if a system of commerce, somewhat more liberal than the present, were established between



tween the two countries. But further, if upon a fair comparison, the balance should seem somewhat against us, surely political systems are not so delicate in their texture as to admit of no sacrifice to what is right, and what is equitable ; and in this instance is it not incumbent upon the mother country to submit to *one*, in order to manifest that humanity towards slaves, the observance of which is so strongly and properly demanded from their proprietors?

If, however, the spirit of our navigation acts should be thought liable to danger, under the sufferance of such a commerce as this, there is yet another, though a less operative and remedial plan, for the relief of the sugar colonies ; which would require only a partial sacrifice of revenue, to the interests and claims of humanity ;—a sacrifice too, which would be amply counterbalanced, by its causing almost a monopoly to Great-Britain, of the supplies of her West-India islands. It is well known that the article of rum forms no inconsiderable part of the produce of a sugar plantation. It is indeed upon this  
article

article that a great number of sugar planters depend, for the purchase of provisions for their slaves, as well as of other contingent supplies ; but the process of making it being tedious, uncertain and expensive, it will not in the Leeward-Islands repay the planter for labour and charges (although the strength of the spirit there is inferior to that of Jamaica) unless it yield him a neat price of 18d sterling per gallon. At about this medium he frequently delivers it to the merchant in the colonies, in payment for supplies he has purchased ; but as the merchant always receives it with reluctance, knowing that he in general incurs a loss of nearly 20 per cent. upon it, before he can realize it in money, he charges a proportionate price for the commodities he has sold to the planter. Indeed it often happens, that the merchant refuses to deal for it :—at all events, it is an undeniable fact, that there is, at least, an average difference of 20 per cent. between the price of articles purchased with money, or bills of exchange, and those purchased with rum ; which difference is against the latter. Here then is indisputably an heavy, additional expense

pense of 20 per cent. to the planter, in purchasing provisions for his slaves, and other occasional supplies, owing to the loss which must ever be anticipated upon the article which is paid to the merchant. But if the duties upon this article in England were so far lowered, as to open a market for it, in which, after all deductions for freight, insurance, leakage, and other incidental charges, it would promise to neat a price, equal to what it bears in the West-Indies, the sugar colonies would be proportionably relieved; the merchant would be glad to receive an article, by which he could effect his remittances, and the necessitous, or embarrassed proprietor, whose custom is often rejected because he has not the command of money, or bills of exchange, and who thence is frequently compelled to contract his slaves allowance, solely against his inclination, would then be enabled to procure them food upon equal and advantageous terms. Larger quantities of provisions and stores would be imported into the colonies from the mother country, when a new and obvious article of remittance could be returned to pay for them;

them ; British navigation would be essentially benefited and extended, in acquiring a considerable addition of freights, both outward and homeward for our shipping ; and the grand object of humanity towards slaves would be greatly promoted, by the proprietors being enabled to supply them with food, more easily and plentifully, than he has the means of doing at present.

A word also, with deference, to a wise and upright administration, upon a distinct branch of this subject. An opinion seems generally to have gone forth, that the wealth of our West-India settlements is equal to the toleration of any imposts ; but it will become those who preside at the helm of publick affairs, to beware how they judge of their present state through a false medium. That state is not to be discovered in the elegant luxury, in which a very inferior number of proprietors, of considerable fortunes and possessions, indulge themselves in the mother country ; but in the distresses and the difficulties, with which proprietors resident in the West-Indies, of small estates,  
and

and mediocrity of circumstances, are obliged to contend : and as it is in characters of this latter description, that the essence of colonial perfection consists, from their constant presence in the colonies, and contribution to their population and security ;—so in justice and in policy, they ought to become the objects of every possible encouragement from the parent state. Every tax should be lightened, and every restriction relaxed, which bear hard upon their interest, and often combine with accidental calamities, to force them after years of painful and fruitless exertion, to surrender their properties into the hands of a mortgagee, or to sell them for half their value, to some rich and avaricious neighbour. Hence they are frequently obliged, in the evening of life, to go in quest of a new field for their industry, in more favoured colonies, under foreign governments ; to the diminution of the population and safety of our own, and to the loss of the parent state. Further, it is to the proprietors resident in the West-Indies, who live among their slaves, and are daily made sensible of their wants and necessities, that we must in a great measure,

measure, look for the melioration of the slave's condition; and for the establishment of that PATRIARCHAL PRINCIPLE, which would tend to counteract and to lessen the evil of slavery itself, the existence of which must nevertheless be regretted by every philosophick and benevolent mind.

But leaving the discussion of slavery in the abstract, to men of more leisure and ability, all that I here contend for is *the improvement of the slave's condition, as he is at present situated in the colonies*; and *that*, upon the fullest conviction that it is comparatively as practicable in execution, as it is an indispensable duty, which we owe both to God and mankind, to commence the undertaking in earnest. To make him a religious and moral being; and to contribute to his ease and comfort, are the gradual and rational measures to higher and more important advantages; and as it is but upon the effects of such measures, that our future expectations can be built, we should not lose sight of a task which calls loudly for our immediate attention; to pursue

sue a distant good, which so much depends upon the performance of it. \* He, whose exertions in this cause, have contributed to bring his venerable hairs prematurely to the grave, was fully sensible of this, as it appears by his writings upon the subject, and considered the emancipation of the slaves in the sugar colonies, however ardently to be wished for by every friend to human nature, yet as an event only to be looked forward to, at some distant period of time, subsequent to improvement and reformation. To him humanity owes much ; much his friends, who had estimated, and who knew his worth. And most cheerfully do I now step forward, to dedicate this little work to the memory of a man, whose general probity and purity of life and manners, are written in too indelible characters, to be sullied by that malignant censure, which will now perhaps be silent and be satisfied.

\* The Rev. James Ramsay.

SHORT AND PRACTICAL  
DISCOURSES  
TO  
NEGRO SLAVES,  
ON THE  
PLAIN AND OBVIOUS PRINCIPLES  
OF  
RELIGION AND MORALITY.

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# Christmas Day, 1786.

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A

D I S C O U R S E

T O

N E G R O E S.

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*On Belief in God.*

I HAVE called you here together this Christmas-day; because, after giving you what little I can afford to give, I think it a very proper time to teach you what will be of much more use to you, if you mind what I say to you. By this, I mean that I am going to tell you what is good for yourselves to do, that you may be happy in your way of life, as slaves, and look up to God Almighty to bless you, and lead you to happiness also in the next world, which he will certainly do, if you try to behave as you ought to do in this.

But

But most of you negroest hink very little about God; and indeed so long as nobody takes the pains to let you know any thing about him, you are not so much to be blamed for the bad things you do. I have thought a great deal upon this matter; and as I believe that God will look to me as your master, to try to make you good, to fear him, and to love him, I will therefore let you know of him, and of what is right, all that I know myself. If after this, there are any of you who will yet continue in your bad ways, I have done my duty; and God will no longer look to me concerning you. I must then punish and correct you for your badness; and what is much worse, and dreadful to be thought of, God Almighty will also punish you for it, both in this world, and when you go into another, which you must do after you die.

But perhaps you may say, “ How do we know that there is a God ? ” To this I answer that, if you think of it, you will know it for the same reason that I do. When  
I look

I look about me, and see so much land and sea, so many men and women, horses, cattle, fowls, birds, fish, and every thing that we can want:—When I see the sun rise in the morning, and after warming and giving light to one part of the world in the day, go round every night to do the same to the other. When after that, I see all the stars come out, and the moon, when her turn comes round, to give us as much light as we want in the night:—I know that all these things could not come of themselves, and do what we see them do every day and every night; and therefore I know that they are made, and kept in order, and directed to move as they do, by some great Being who had power to make them, and has equal power to order them as he pleases.

It is this great Being whom we call God. It is He who has made, and who orders all things. From what he has done, we believe that he is able to do every thing, and to look into every thing under him;

him; and that he does look into every thing, even into your hearts and mine, to see if we are doing bad or good. We believe him to be all goodness in himself, because of the goodness of every thing which he has made, and of the happiness which he makes us all feel when we do good; and as he is all goodness in himself, so he loves nothing but goodness in others; and as he knows every thing that we do, even what we think upon when we are shut up in our chambers in the darkest night, so he will use us according as we deserve. If we do good, he will find a way to do good to us by some means or other; either by giving us what good things we may want, or by making us happy and pleased in ourselves: and besides that, if we live in such a manner as pleases him, doing as much good as we can so long as we live, and wait with patience till it shall please him that we should die; after our deaths he will carry us to a better world than this is, where he will make us happy for ever. On the other hand, if we do bad, and will not  
leave

leave off our badness and come good, he will always find some way or other to punish us in this life, by making us uneasy in ourselves, and by making every thing that is bad to happen to us ; and after our deaths, he will punish us still worse for our wickedness.

This is what we ought to believe of God, and I hope you will all of you think well of it, and from what I have now told you, that you will kneel down at your bed sides every night when you go to bed, and every morning when you get up, and pray to God to bless you, and to make you good, and to wash all badness away from your hearts.

I hope you will make a proper use of what I have now said to you, and at another time I will tell you more. I have only one thing further to say to you at present. This is Christmas time, why it is called so, I mean (with God's blessing) to tell you some other time. All  
I will

I will now say about it is this ; that as I dare say you all wish to be merry and happy, I wish to see you so, and will do every thing I can to make you so. But I wish to see you behave in such a manner as that you may be merry and happy, without doing any harm to yourselves or any body else. Therefore remember, not to eat, or drink more than will do you good, as that will only make you sick, and uneasy to yourselves ; and by all means to take care to keep from drunkenness, as that will not only make you sick, but will also lead you into quarrels and disputes, which will oblige me to punish you, which I shall, at all times, be sorry for, but particularly at this time.

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## DISCOURSE II.

*The Subject of a Belief in God continued.*

I HOPE you have all thought well upon what I told you at Christmas, of the great power and goodness of God, and how  
he

he sees every thing that we do; and that you have since prayed to him, and tried to please him by being good. I promised at that time to tell you more of him, and of what is right, which promise I am now going to keep; therefore I beg you will listen and mind what I have to say to you.

No persons can be good till they have brought themselves to believe in God, who is the Father of all goodness; and no persons can believe properly in him, without they think often of the great things he has done, and is continually doing. It was for this reason that I first told you of the world, and all that is in it; of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and how they always keep in the same order, and move in the same manner: all which you can see as well as myself, and if you use yourselves to think upon them as you ought to do, you will then have full reason to believe what I have already told you, that they are made by God, and kept in order by him. But I will tell you something more of these things, to shew you more of the



great power of God, that you may the better believe in him; after which, I shall try to shew you what good actions will be pleasing to him, and make yourselves happy.

All the people in the world, who have thought as they ought to do upon what they see and know, and particularly upon the order of the sun, moon, and stars, which continually go about giving light to the world and warming it, have said and believed that these things must have been made and directed by a great God, who is all Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness; but a long time passed before the shape and bigness of this world was found out, and of the sun, the moon, and the stars; yet some very wise men, by thinking a great deal upon them, were suffered by God Almighty to find them out at last, and perhaps brought into the world for that purpose, that men might know his great power and goodness, and have no excuse for being wicked. These wise men have  
found

found out that this world is a great round globe, hanging in the air, and is near eight thousand miles through; that the sun, which is commonly looked upon as a ball of light or fire, of no very great size, is more than ninety times as big as this whole world. They have also found out, that all the stars which we see, and which many look upon as nothing more than as so many sparks of fire or light, are so many worlds, and suns and moons, such as our world, our sun, and moon; and it is very likely that there are certain creatures, whom God hath made to live in those worlds, as he hath made ourselves and what we see, to live in this. I do not mention these things to you that you may trouble yourselves to think how God hath been able to make them; for that none of us can tell, and indeed have nothing to do with. It is enough that we know that these things are so, that we may wonder at his great power, wisdom, and goodness, and believe the more in him, and what he can do; and I have told you of them for this purpose;  
in

in hopes that if I can once bring you to believe properly in God as you ought to do, you will try to do what pleases him.

We must come now to think particularly of what pleases him. And first we may plainly see, from the wondrous works of his hands, from his great power in making them—his wisdom in ordering them and directing them—and his goodness in preserving and keeping them, so that the creatures he hath made may constantly have the use of them :—that he can love nothing but what is good, and must hate all manner of wickedness ; and, according to what I have before told you, as from the great power he has already shewn, we may be sure he is able to look into every thing, so we may be sure he will reward or punish us as we deserve : for though he is merciful and good, yet he will do justice too, or else there would be no difference between the people who are good, and those who are bad, if the good were not to be his favourites, and the bad were suffered to go without punishment.

nishment. It therefore is the duty of us all to try to know all manner of goodness, and to follow it; and to hate all manner of wickedness, and to keep ourselves from doing it.

Now, to believe in God, which I have told you to do, is the beginning of all goodness;—without this no person can be good; because their goodness will have nothing to depend upon, and nothing to look forward to, to bless and reward it; and so are we made that, if we did not think our goodness would bring some good to ourselves, even the best among us would be too apt to do just what he liked, whether it was right or not: whereas, in looking up to God, who is the Father of all goodness, and who will be as a kind father to us all if we trust in him, and try to please him, the beginning of our goodness is fixed as it were upon a rock, and cannot be shaken. We know that he is able, and loves, to do good to us, if we try to please him; and as he is the Father and Maker of us all, so  
the

the first good thing we can do to please him is to fear him, to love him, and to place our dependance upon him above all things, because he has a right to it. The first thing therefore that we ought to think upon, in order to be good, is to pray to God to make us so; for all goodness proceeds from him. Let me therefore once more tell you not to forget to pray to him, with a good heart, every morning and evening for this purpose, and to try to keep from doing any thing which you know to be bad.

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### D I S C O U R S E III.

*On doing to others as we wish them to do to ourselves.*

AS the first step to goodness, you will remember how I have told you to believe in God, to fear him, to love him, to depend upon him, and to pray to him to make you good.

good. But this is not all; for though believing in God, and praying to him, are the beginning of what goodness is in us, yet we are not to think that to believe in him, and to pray to him, without trying ourselves to do any other good thing, will either bring his blessing upon us, or make us good. No: God will look for something else besides these, from them who wish for his favour and care. He will expect that we will not only pray to him, but will also do every thing else that is right, so far as we know and have learnt it. I will therefore now go on to tell you how to be good in all that you have to do with every person whatsoever. This is a very great matter to be thought of; and therefore I beg you will mind what I have to say to you upon it. Indeed you must plainly see as well as myself, that none of us can be truly good, without we shew that goodness towards our fellow creatures, with whom God Almighty has placed us to live in this world.

Now,

Now, as to what this goodness is, there is no difference between the master and the slave in this respect. There is indeed a difference in our stations of life; but the same God made us both; and I truly believe made us both alike able to become good and happy. Now, the way to goodness and happiness is just the same for you as for me; and it is very easily found out, if you will but think at all upon it. Joined to that other part of your duty to God, which I have already told you of, it is only this: "To do to every body as you would wish every body to do unto you\*," if you try to follow these few plain words, God will bless you. You will do as much good as you can, and as little harm as possible; because you know that you wish every body to do good to you, and not to do you harm. Suppose for instance, you should not be honest, and from any bad ways you have got, should

\* Though the author thought it incumbent on him to begin early to impress upon the minds of his hearers the grand comprehensive rule of the Messiah's morality, he thought it too early to treat of the sacred source from whence it proceeded.

think

think of thieving, and taking away any thing that did not belong to you ; only ask yourselves, how you would like any body to come and steal any thing of yours. Your conscience immediately tells you, “ Not at all ;” why then you must know that it is wrong to do so ; and if you do it, you may be assured that God will punish you for it one way or other. Suppose again, from any badness in your heart, you should be going to tell lies upon any body, by which you may get them punished unjustly, or hurt in some other manner ; only ask yourselves how you would like to be served so, and your conscience will tell it is a very bad thing, and that you ought not to do it. Suppose again that any poor person—we will say a poor negro—(who was hungry and dry, and had nothing to buy him any victuals) was to come to you, and you could afford to give him something, but would not do it out of covetousness ; only ask yourselves how cruel you would think it in any fellow servant or slave to deny you a morsel of victuals, or a trifle to  
 buy



buy it with; and your conscience will tell you that you ought to open your heart to the poor, and them that are in want, as far as you can afford to do it. This indeed is a part of what we call charity, and is what we must always think ourselves bound to do, as much as lies in our power; for God is pleased to see us charitable, and will forgive a number of our faults for it.

But to go on with what I am telling you about: Of doing to every body as you would wish them to do unto you. Whenever you are going to do any thing that you think there can be any harm in, always ask yourselves how you would like to be served so by any other person. And if it would not please you to have it done to you, you must be sure and not do it to others: for this reason, though any person should be bad to you, should steal from you, or tell any lies on you, or do you any other bad thing, yet you are not to do any badness to them in return; for supposing you had wronged

wronged any body yourself, yet you would not like to be wronged again, though you would deserve it. All you ought to do is to try and forgive them as much as you can, (in hopes that God will forgive you for your faults) and keep away from them as much as possible, and have nothing to do with them.

I will suppose yet another thing. I will suppose that you may have a bad master, who treats you ill, who does not feed you, clothe you, or take care of you; which however I hope is not your case at present; yet if you would wish to please God, you ought to bear all this patiently. You ought not to disobey his orders, to steal from him, to tell him lies, to run away from him, or to do any other bad thing towards him; but you ought rather to try to turn his heart to you, and to make him love you, by doing all you can for him. For suppose any one of you was a master and had a slave, and was a bad master to that slave,  
yet

yet you would not like that slave to be bad to you : and as I have already told you so, to do good, and to please God, and to make him bless us, we are to do to others as we *wish* them to do us—not as they *may* do to us. If then a slave is not to behave badly to a bad master, I hardly need to tell you your duty to a good one. If you have a master who feeds you, who clothes you, who takes care of you when you are sick, and endeavours to make you good and happy, you must know that you will be doubly bad, if you are not honest and true to him; if you do not mind his business, and if you ever run away from him. However do not think I tell you this for any good that you are to do to myself, any farther than as it will be good for you to do so to any master. No: I have but one end in all these things that I tell you; that is to lead you to goodness, that God may look upon you in his mercy and make you happy.

Remember then what I have told you, and do not let it go out of your minds.

Believe

Believe in God and pray to him to bless you and to make you good. Be honest in all your dealings. Tell nothing but the truth, and make no stories against any body. Give what you can afford to your poor fellow-creature, who may be in want. Do good even to those who may do bad to you ; always keeping these few plain words in your hearts, that, if we would be good, and please God, we must not only believe in him, fear him, love him and pray to him ; but must also “ Do to others as we wish “ them to do to ourselves.”

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## DISCOURSE IV.

*Of a Life to come, and various Branches of Duty.*

I HAVE already told you a great many good things, which you must do, if you wish to be happy, and to please God, and  
make

make him bleſs you. I hope you will keep them in your minds, and try to do what you have been told, as much as lies in your power; becauſe if you will not do good, now you are told it, you may be aſſured, God will puniſh you; and when God becomes the puniſher, he puniſhes worſe than I am able to tell you: and therefore you ought always to be greatly afraid how you do any thing to make him angry with you; for God will not puniſh you as a man puniſhes you. When you do any badneſs, and your maſter puniſhes you, it is ſoon over; and many of you are too apt to forget it in a few days afterwards. But God puniſhes bad people, one way or other, as long as they live; and if they do not leave off their badneſs \* and come good, will puniſh them worſe than they can think of after they die. You may perhaps indeed wonder how God is to puniſh you after you die;

\* The author has uſed the word *badneſs*, the phraſe *come good*, and ſeveral others, as being moſt agreeable to the dialect of his auditors, and conſequently moſt intelligible to them.

for I am afraid many of you think that when you die every thing is at end with you ; but if you do, you think what is very wrong, and what may lead you to a great deal of harm and wickedness. It is true, your body must die and crumble into dust, when it pleases God to call you from this world. But then your soul, which makes your body to move, and do as it does while you are alive, must go into another world and live for ever. Now, one's soul is what we call one's self ; and only think how sad a thing it will be to us, when God calls us into another world, if we should go before him stained and spotted with all manner of wickedness ;—before him, who being all goodness himself, can love nothing but goodness ; and who hating every thing that is wicked, will put forth his dreadful anger and punish it. On the other hand, think how happy we shall be if we have done all those good things that will please him in this world, and can go before him with souls full of that goodness which he loves, to receive his blessing and  
be

be made happy for ever. And never forget that God takes notice of every thing we do, whether good or bad. His great power, by which he made the world, the sun, the moon, the stars, and every thing I have told you of, makes him able to look into every thing he has made. There is nothing can be hid from him; and though you may impose upon men by telling what is false to them, yet God sees it and will punish it. It is of no use to go into the darkest corner that ever was, where we think nobody can see, to do any thing that is wicked; for the eye of God is upon us every where alike: and it is the greatest happiness to them that are good that it is so; for God takes notice of all the goodness they do, and will bless them for it, as surely as he will punish bad people for their wickedness.

Now I have already told you, as well as I can, how to be good. First, to pray to God to make you so, and then to try to do all other good things which I have told you of; but when you pray to God, mind how  
you

you do it; do not think that saying a few words in a hurry, without thinking of what you are about, will be pleasing to him. No: You must think well of what you are doing when you pray to God. You must try to put all other thoughts out of your head, and give yourself up at that time to God alone. You must then kneel down to him and pray to him slowly and seriously to look upon you in his mercy, to forgive you for the faults you have done, to wash away all badness from your hearts, and to bless you and make you good; and in the same manner you must thank him for all the good he hath done to you. You must not ask him for every thing you may wish for, but ask him to make you good; for he only knows what is best for you to have; and whether he gives, or takes away, we must be satisfied that it is for our good, and wait with patience upon his will.

There is yet another thing that I have to tell you. God did not make men and women to mix together in the same manner



manner as cattle, and other creatures ; but to live decently with one another, and if they have children, to take care of them between them ; therefore you may see from this, that for any man to have more than one woman, or any woman to have more than one man, is a wicked thing, and is not pleasing to God ; and if a man and woman live together, it is their duty to be constant to each other, and not to go to other people ; for if they do, it is a wicked thing, which God will surely take notice of. This is what I have to say upon this matter to you that are grown up. As for you who are so young that you ought not to have any thing to do with these matters ; it is your duty to keep yourselves from them until you grow up to be men and women ; and therefore I shall not only punish you, but what is a terrible thing to be thought of, God will punish you if you suffer any person to entice you with money, or in any other manner, to use any freedoms with you. If I find you in any badness of this kind, I certainly shall  
not

not suffer you to live in my family, but shall send you away somewhere or other ; whereas, if you behave as you ought to do, modestly and decently, and have nothing to do with any wickedness of this sort, I shall take care, as far as lies in my power, that you shall be properly provided for according to your ages and stations. I tell you this in time, that you may not get into wickedness, and be miserable all your lives afterwards. It is an easy thing for every body to keep out of wickedness, if they will not listen to it at first ; or even if they have done any thing wrong, to take care and leave it off before they go too far :—for God will forgive them who are sorry for the wickedness they have done, if they leave it off, and live as they ought to do afterwards. But we are not to try God's mercy and goodness so far as to do bad things, because we hope that he will forgive us ; for this is like imposing upon his goodness, and making use of it to make us wicked, instead of making us better, which we must easily see that God will not suffer ; therefore,

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when people are told what is good and pleases God, they must know that it is their duty to try to become better and better, and to keep away from wickedness instead of doing it; and if for want of knowing, or thinking as they ought, they should do any thing wrong; if they are truly sorry for it, and take care not to do it again, they may then hope for God's forgiveness.

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## DISCOURSE V.

*Catechetical, with a short Form of Prayer.*

I HAVE already told you, in as short and plain a way as I can, what is good and right for you to do, that you may live contented in this world, and expect to be happy in the next. I hope you all understand what I have said to you; and that since I have been telling you about what is good and right, you have been trying to follow

follow it, and to do as I have desired you for your own good and happiness: for if you know these things, and will not do them, remember, God will no longer look to me concerning you (for I have done my part in telling you what is good and right) but he will look to yourselves for your wicked doings, and will bring his dreadful anger upon you to punish you worse than I can speak of, at a time when perhaps you little think of it. I however shall not leave off with you here; but as Sunday is a day which ought to be particularly set apart to think of these things, as often as I can on that day, I shall put you in mind of your duty to God, to every body, and to yourselves. But first, as it is proper that I should know if you understand what I have already told you, and if it has been of any use to lead you to goodness; I am going to ask you a few questions, which you are to answer as well as you can, according to what you think of them: after which I will teach you how to answer them.

1. Do you believe in God?

*Answer.\** Yes.

2d. Why do you believe in God?

*Answer.* Because, when we look round us, and see every thing that is made, the sun, the moon, and stars, always going in the same order; and every thing that lives and grows in this world that we live in; and when we think upon ourselves and what we do, we are sure all these things could not come out of nothing; and therefore we know that they must have been made by some great being who had power to do it, and to order them as he pleased.

3d. Why do we believe God is able to do every thing?

*Answer.* From what we see he has done already, and is always doing, keeping every thing in order, and making it always an-

\* The answers here published were written by the author, in order to assist his hearers in fixing and expressing their ideas; for though their minds began to be susceptible of religious impressions, their notions, as must naturally be expected, were yet confused; nor could they easily give an account of them,

swer

swer the same end—witness the sun, the moon, and the stars.

4th. Why do we believe God to be all goodness.

*Answer.* Because of that order in which he keeps every thing for the use of the creatures he has made, and because of that happiness which he makes us all feel when we do good, and that fear, and uneasiness, which he makes us feel when we do any thing wicked.

5th. Do you pray to God ?

*Answer.* Yes.

6th. What do you pray to God for ?

*Answer.* To make us good.

To help you in praying to God, I will now try to teach you a short prayer, which I think will best suit you at present. You will say it aloud after me ; and I beg you will try to remember it, so as to say it every night when you go to bed, and every morning when you get up ; saying it upon your knees, and thinking well of what you are doing.

THE

## THE PRAYER.

“ Great and good God, Father and  
 “ Maker of all things, look upon us in  
 “ thy mercy and goodness. Forgive us  
 “ our wickedness. Wash away all badness  
 “ from our hearts, that we may be wicked  
 “ no more. Help us to do the good things  
 “ that are told us. Hear our prayers, and  
 “ accept our thanks, for all thy mercy and  
 “ goodness to us.”

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## DISCOURSE VII.

*On the Correction of a Slave, who had behaved ill, introduced with some Religious Remarks.*

YOU will remember that I first began to read to you at Christmas, thinking *that* a proper time and a proper occasion to try to open your hearts to that goodness, without which no persons can please God, or deserve

serve his care of them. And first, as all goodness comes from God alone, who may be said to be the Father of it; and as no person can be good without believing truly in him, I therefore told you as much as I thought you were fit to hear concerning him, and the great things he hath made and kept in order. To believe as you ought to do in those things which I then told you, you need only look about you, and afterwards think upon every thing you have seen. The more you do this, the more you will have reason to believe that what I have said to you about these things was true and right: for were it not that every thing that we see becomes so common to us, that we do not mind it as we ought, there is not a bush or tree that grows but is sufficient to make us believe in God. Can we then fail to believe in him when we see that mighty globe of light the sun, which as I have told you before is ninety times as big as this whole world, though it appears so small to us, because it is so far from us; when we see it, I say, rising in the same place  
every



every morning, and setting every evening, where it has done, from the beginning of the world ; or can we fail to believe in him, when, in these delightful moon-light nights, we turn our eyes up to heaven, and see the moon, and the stars without number, beautifully shining, and giving us a light more pleasant than day itself ? The moon, which is nearly as large as this world, and the stars many of which are a great deal larger, though they seem so small from their distance from us ? These and numberless other things equally wonderful and surprising, must, at the first sight, convince us, that there is a God greater in his power, in his wisdom, and goodness, than we poor mortals can possibly think of. But when we go farther and think of the wonderful order in which they all are kept, always doing the same things at the same times and seasons, is it possible that we should do otherwise than believe in him, praise him, and fear him ?

I should

I should not have told you of these things in particular so often, but that the first thing to make you good and happy is, that you should believe in God, fear him and love him truly. After what I have so many times told you, I hope you by this time believe in him as you ought, and that you will go on to shew your fear and love of him, by praying to him with a true heart, by doing to every body as you wish they should do to you ; by being faithful, diligent and honest in your master's service ; by constancy to each other among the old, and by the young keeping from wickedness : all which I have before told you of, and will again repeat to you as I find occasion ; for it is by minding these things, and doing them, that you will best shew your fear and love of God, who will then look upon you in his mercy, and make you good and happy. This I hope, and am willing to think, that most of you are sensible of, and will behave yourselves accordingly ; and indeed so much did I expect that you would all have minded what I have said to you for your own good and happiness,

piness, that I pleased myself with the thought, that I should not be obliged any more to make use of punishment among you. But I am sorry to say that *there* stands *One*, who, though he knows as well as any of you, what is good, having been told it in the same manner with yourselves, and being able to understand it, yet will not leave off his badness, without punishment, which I never wish to use, if I can avoid it. You know that he went away from the yard sometime ago, and staid out a whole night, leaving every thing exposed to be picked up by thievish negroes. You know that I forgave him for it, upon a promise of better behaviour, and not going out again without mine, or his mistress's leave. You see now how he has kept this promise. He went away on Friday night, and staid out till this morning, when he was brought home; having had the assurance to ask somebody to beg for him, though I have so often forgiven him, that he must know I can do it no longer, for his own sake as well as for mine.

mine. You know how much I am in want of a negro to attend about the kitchen ; and in particular, how great a fault it is, for a negro to leave his master's yard at night, when his master supposes that he is there, and when he may be wanted for many things. You must remember too, what I have told you of the duty of slaves to their masters, how they ought to be honest, industrious, and sober, and never to run away or absent themselves. You know also that if he had asked either me or his mistress, for leave to go, we should never have any objection to give him two or three hours, whenever he could be spared. Against this all he has to say is, that he was obliged to go out to look for victuals, though he has the same weekly allowance paid him as yourselves, with a part of what can be spared from the table ; and I have offered him a piece of ground, and time to plant it, for his own use, and though allowing that he wanted to go, he knows that it was his duty to ask. I mention these things to you, because I would not have you think, that while

I am

I am trying to lead you to goodness and happiness, I punish any of you out of anger or passion, or for any other reason but to do justice, and to preserve that order as your master, which it is necessary that I should keep up, as well for your own good as my own. For in respect to that man, you know it is a long time ago since I have punished him, and how often I have forgiven him ; and if I were to let him go on any longer, I should be obliged to sell him to somebody off the island (for nobody would buy him here) and then he would see his wife and children no more, and would be abandoned to all manner of wickedness ; for few would take the pains to tell him what is good, as I have done ; and when he was thus given up to wickedness, after being told what is good, it is to be feared that God Almighty would punish him, and make him miserable for ever. You see therefore how necessary it is that he should be punished ; but to shew you all that I do not punish him out of anger, but only for the reason I have mentioned, I now leave him to be tried  
by

by yourselves, and you are to tell me freely what punishment you think he deserves. I must however remind you, that a negro who absents himself, or runs away, is guilty of a fault against his fellow slaves, as well as against his master ; because he obliges them to do his work while he is away, as well as their own ; but this you are to consider or not, as you like.\*

It

\* The negro here alluded to had been a notorious marauder and runaway, and the property of different masters before he came into the author's hands. With some bad qualities, he had also some good ones : he was kind hearted and obliging, acute, and capable of distinction. He made one observation in particular, which the author thinks it necessary to take notice of, because it confirms the opinion, that it is but of little purpose to instruct negroes in the forms of religion, without taking pains to explain to them the principles of it. This poor fellow (alluding to the author's discourses) remarked, that " he could now " plainly see, that his master was doing good for his negroes ; for," said he, " I once belonged to a master " who taught me to say my prayers, but they were of no " use to me, because he never told me the meaning of " them. Now I know why I ought to pray to God and " be good." For his present delinquency he was fairly tried by his peers, who sentenced him to a mild and moderate punishment. He reformed considerably from the

It is not pleasing to me to be obliged to say so much upon this matter ; but you will find it is necessary for all your good that I should do so. I shall now close with telling you, that when punishment is so necessary to any of your fellow slaves, you should add to it by shaming them, and taking no other notice of them, until they shall themselves be truly sorry for their faults, and mend their behaviour.

time when the author first began to instruct him, but his constitution being broken and impaired, he died about fifteen months afterwards.

Among domestick slaves, who, in general, are in a state of higher improvement than those upon a plantation, this mode of trying a delinquent. by his peers, may be easily adopted : and it is commendable, because it teaches the slave a *moral* distinction, in the example which the master sets of equity and moderation towards him. Upon plantations indeed it will not be altogether so practicable, until some reform has been effected ; but in the mean time, it is entirely in the master's power to proportion punishments to offences, upon the principles of justice and humanity, so far as slavery will admit of them ; to make those punishments known to his slaves ; to keep within the bounds of them himself, and not to suffer them to be inflicted, without due proof of the fact.

## DISCOURSE VII.

*On the Necessity of being Industrious and obliging.*

THERE is a notion which I fear is too apt to prevail among some of you, upon your master's taking pains to read to you, and to teach you what will make you good and happy ; which is, that you often think of it only in hopes that it may be the means of your taking more pleasure, and doing less work than before. Now, if any of you think of the good advice I have given you, no further than this, you not only deceive yourselves, but you do me wrong, and likewise behave ill towards God, in making a bad use of the good things that are told you. To put a stop therefore to any bad thoughts of this kind, and to set you all right in this matter, I must point out to you the necessity of being industrious, as a part of your duty to God, to yourselves, and to your master.

When



When God Almighty made men and women to live in this world, he made them all to work, and to be employed in some way or other ; that so they might become useful to one another, and by doing their duty in their stations in this world, they might deserve greater happiness in another. To prove that this is true, we need only look upon those people who are idle and lazy ; and we shall find, that their idleness and laziness are punished by God Almighty, in being the cause of making them both wicked and unhappy ; for when people are idle, their hearts are too often open to all manner of wickedness, and wherever wickedness comes in, trouble is sure to follow it. Besides, lazy people are a plague to themselves, and of no use to their fellow creatures ; and therefore, as they do not answer the purpose that God has made them for, so God cannot love them ; whereas, they who are industrious, will soon find a pleasure in doing their duty, and in doing it, they will please God, who will bless them for it. Not that I mean by this, that people are to  
be

be always at work, for that would be unreasonable, and what no person would be able to bear. There must therefore be some time allowed for rest, some for sleep, some for meal times, and some, when it can be spared, to take a little innocent pleasure in moderation; and above all, there should be some time set apart of every day, to think how we have behaved ourselves, and to pray to God, to forgive us if we have done any thing wrong, and to lead and strengthen us in goodness. All this time is what God Almighty intended that people should have to themselves; and besides this, he set apart Sunday as a day of rest, but not to be passed in quarrelling, drunkenness, or any manner of wickedness; but to be passed in goodness, in lifting up our hearts in prayer unto him, in thanking him for his great mercies, and in being innocently cheerful and happy; doing no more work on that day than what we cannot help, in order to assist ourselves or others. At other times, it is plain that he meant people should work and do their duty, whether

ther masters or servants; and that they should do it cheerfully and willingly, with a good heart, and without grumbling or ill temper; and that servants, when they see any thing that they know ought and should be done, should do it, without waiting for their master's or mistress's orders; and should be as careful, as faithful, and as diligent in every thing that belongs or concerns their master or mistress, as they would be of what belongs to, or concerns themselves.

There is another thing that I have to tell you: that is, never to give huffish, or short answers, or put on sour looks to your master and mistress. This is what you should not do to any body, much less to your master or mistress, who you must know cannot put up with these things, without putting an end to that proper order which must be kept up among you. Besides, this sulky and rude way of behaviour must turn out against yourselves in the end; for though your master and mistress should  
be

be angry with you, (whether they have reason to be so or not,) still you must know that any short or rude answers from you will only serve to make them still more angry; whereas, if you give them a civil and proper answer, with that submission and softness which becomes a servant, their anger will begin to cool, they will consider and think properly upon the matter; and should you be even deserving of punishment, you certainly will receive less than if after doing any thing wrong, you had made it worse by giving saucy answers, and provoking your master or mistress. Therefore let me advise you for your own sakes, to be civil and good tempered; and if your master or mistress should desire any thing of you which you may think a hardship, not to fulk or grumble upon it, but to speak to them civilly, and as you ought to do, about it. Further, if you want any thing at any time, which your master or mistress can give you, or do for you, never get another person to ask for it for you, but always apply  
for

for it yourselves ; for a good master or mistress will never like their negroes to be ashamed or afraid to ask them any thing that is reasonable and right, and will be much better pleased to give any thing at the desire of the person who wants it, than if they send another person to ask for it for them.

I do not tell you these things for any good that is to come to me from your doing as you ought to do, because you well know that if you do not behave well, after being so often told what is right, it is necessary that I should make you do so, by proper correction, however it may be against my wish and inclination to give it. I tell them to you because, working as I am for your good, and taking up my time and my thoughts in writing and reading to make you good and happy, I should be very sorry for your sakes, if my good advice were thrown away upon you, and you were no better after it than those poor negroes who have nobody to instruct them about God  
Almighty,

Almighty, and the goodness which we must do to please him and to be happy. And indeed you must now be able to see yourselves how just and reasonable it is, that the more you are told, and the more you know, the more goodness God will expect of you. It is therefore your duty to try to become better and better in every respect, and to behave in a very different manner to what those negroes do who have nobody to teach them. As well as being constant in your prayers to God Almighty, and in endeavouring to do those other good things which I have told you, you should also be more industrious in your own affairs, and the same in mine, watching over your master's interest honestly and carefully. Your becoming better and better from all these things that I have told you, will prove to me that my advice is not thrown away upon you; and I shall always be happy in every thing that I can do to make you good and happy, provided you shew yourselves sensible of it, by improving yourselves, and going on to behave the better for it. Further it is your duty  
 who

who have children, to teach all these things to your children; and to keep a strict hand over them, while they are yet young, and bring them up in the fear and love of God, and the constant use of prayer unto him; and to keep them out of all wickedness.

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## DISCOURSE VIII.

*Recapitulatory, and against Swearing and Lying.*

FROM what I told you last Sunday, I hope you now think as you ought to do of the good work I am doing for you, in teaching you your duty towards God, towards every body, and yourselves; that is, that instead of suffering yourselves to look upon the pains I am taking for you only as it may lead to your taking more pleasure, or being more able to indulge an inclination to be idle; instead of this I say,  
I hope

I hope you think it is your duty to be more industrious and careful both in your own business and in mine ; and in this, and in every other good thing, to improve yourselves, and shew how much better you can and will be, from being taught what is good, than those poor slaves who have nobody to teach them, and who have some excuse for their badness, because often when they do wrong, they do it for want of knowing or thinking better. Now, it is your duty to remember that if you do wrong, you do it with your eyes open ; you are told what is good for you to do, and you see it ; and therefore what is good will be expected from you ; not by me alone, who being but a human creature like yourselves, am liable to be deceived and imposed upon, but by the great God of all things, who seeth and searcheth all our hearts, and who knows even what we intend or think of, as well as what we do. It is He that will expect that goodness from you which I told you ; and that will punish you if you are wicked after being told what is good.



It will make me happy therefore, for your own sakes, to find that you make a proper use of all that you have heard, which will be best proved to me by an alteration in your manners and behaviour, and by your becoming so much better than those slaves who are yet left in the dark as to what is good, so as that you may be quite a different kind of people. I hope soon to see this happy change among you, and that, being sensible of your duty to God, to every body, and yourselves, you try to do that duty, as much as lies in your power, according to those plain and easy rules which I have often told you of, and which as you cannot be too often put in mind of, I shall again repeat to you. They are,

1st. To believe in God, to fear him, and to love him with all our hearts and minds; to pray to him to forgive us our sins, to make us good, and to cause us to put our trust in him; and to return him our true and hearty thanks for all his mercy and goodness.

2d. To

2d. To do to every body as we wish every body to do to ourselves; that is, to do good to every body, because we wish every body to do good to ourselves.

3d. Not to think that we come into this world to lead a life of idleness, or pleasure, but to be industrious, and do our duties in the different ways of life in which God hath placed us; and to take all opportunities of doing all the good that lies in our power, as well by telling others what is good, as by helping them in their wants, when we can spare them any thing.

By these rules, and in them, we see and know our duty to God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves; all which if we try to do to the best of our power, we shall then be good, and answer that great end for which God made us and placed us in this world: that is, to try us, if we will walk in that good way which he hath pointed out for us, so as that we may become better and better, and deserve that happiness which he  
has

has in store for the good, after their deaths, in another world.

But there are several wicked things, which people do from having got into bad ways, and which they must be sorry for, and try to get the better of, as being plainly against those rules of goodness which are laid down for us.

Taking the name of God in vain, and cursing or swearing are very wicked things; which are too common among us; and which are sufficient to provoke God's anger against us, to punish this wickedness, unless we try to leave it off, and shew our sorrow for it.

With respect to the first, we must plainly see that it is not right for them, who believe in God, fear him, and love him, to make use of his name in common talk, or in any dispute that happens; for this is not paying that respect to it which his creatures ought to feel for it; besides, by making use of his  
holy

holy name in common, as we would do of any other name, we, by degrees, get into a bad habit of thinking less of it, and setting less value upon it; whereas, we should always think of the name of God as a most precious thing, which is not to be made use of, or called to witness, unless it is in a very particular or serious matter; and then we must be very careful indeed that we speak nothing but what is true. For to say what is false is very bad in itself; but to say what is false, and call God to witness it, is so very wicked, that we must be sure it will draw down God's dreadful anger upon it. Indeed, there are very few things (if any) that can happen to us, in which it would be right to call God to witness, for we should lock up the name of God as a treasure in our hearts, to call upon when our minds are troubled, to make use of in our prayer when we return him thanks for all the good he sends us; at which time our hearts should be given up, if possible, to him alone, and nothing else should be in our thoughts.

It

It is in this serious and particular manner, which I have told you of, that the name of the great God and Father of all things is only to be made use of. To use it in any other manner is, at best, but taking his name in vain, which is in itself a very bad thing. A like wickedness to this is that of cursing people and swearing at them. This is in itself an idle and vicious habit, which it is by no means a sufficient excuse for, that we do not mean, or wish, that what we say should happen to others; but if we possibly could mean it, it would then be a very wicked thing indeed: for, in the first place, it is very wicked in us (as being contrary to that rule of doing good to every body, which I have told you of), to wish any badness to any body, or any thing whatever. In the next place, it is a great sin against God, who alone knows who deserve bad or good to be sent to them, and who alone has the right and power of sending it. Such curses therefore, if meant in earnest, only return back upon the heads of those who made them, to plague themselves, and  
to

to make them wicked and miserable. If not meant in earnest, but only spoken in passion, or from any bad habit which we may have got, they are still bad, as people can have no right to use such expressions to one another.

I have already told you at different times, that “ To tell lies ” is another wickedness; and certainly it is, and a great one, both towards God, and to our fellow-creatures; and it is also hurtful to ourselves in the end. It is a sin towards God, because it is told before him, although, from knowing our hearts, and all their secrets, he knows it is false. It is a sin towards our fellow-creatures, because it may make, and often does make, a great deal of mischief among them; and, at any rate, it deceives, imposes upon, and leads them wrong; and it is hurtful to the person telling it, because a liar never comes off so well in the end as he that speaks truth. Even if any persons have done wrong, and be charged with it, it must be better to confess it than to deny it; for if they confess

fess it, they have a chance of being forgiven for telling the truth; and if they should not be forgiven, they will only be punished for the bad thing they have done, and then all is over; whereas, if they tell lies, it will always lie upon their minds, and it will most probably be found out at last, when they will receive double punishment. Besides, after being once found out to be liars, they cannot expect that any person will believe them afterwards; so that if at any other time, they should be charged with a fault, of which they are innocent, still they will not be believed. Thus they are not only sure to suffer more than those who speak the truth; but they also make God angry with them, and will receive punishment from him for their wickedness; and as, to save themselves, they either accuse some innocent persons, or are the means of their being punished unjustly, this is so bad a thing, that they must expect that God will severely punish it. Liars therefore must every way bring unhappiness upon themselves. Nobody can place any trust in those

those who are given to this wickedness: they do so much mischief that every body is concerned in bringing them to shame and punishment, which generally fall upon them, and that the more heavily, because, adding one wickedness to another, and still telling lies to excuse themselves, the whole comes out and falls upon them at once. If this be the case with those who tell lies only for their own excuse, it is easy to see how much worse it is with them who do it out of spite and malice, and to bring badness upon innocent people. These are so very wicked that the anger of God and his dreadful punishments will be more particularly set against them than for other lies, as well as the hatred and contempt of all their fellow-creatures.

In the substance of what I have read to you this day, you will find that I have not only put you in mind of what I before told you of your duty to God, to your fellow-creatures, and yourselves, but also have shewn you what respect ought to be paid to  
the



the name of God, that you are never to take his name in vain, that is, to make use of it on any but the most serious occasions : that you are not to curse, or to swear any wicked oaths against any person, or to wish any badness to happen to them ; and that you are never to do so wicked a thing as that of telling lies. I purpose next Sunday to ask you a few questions concerning your belief in God, and your reason for believing in him ; and what it is to be good, to which it cannot be hard for you to make proper answers, if you think of what I have told you. You will therefore recollect what I have read to you, that you may give some proper account of those good thoughts which I have endeavoured to fix in your minds \*.

\* These questions were proposed on the following Sunday, but as they were much of the same nature with those printed in a former discourse, the author thought it unnecessary to insert them.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE IX.

*Of Happiness, consisting in doing our Duty.*

WHEN I examined you all last Sunday, about what you thought of God Almighty, and those good things which I have told you of, I was sorry to find some of you not so ready to answer as I expected. This leads me to fear, that you do not think so much as you ought to do, of that goodness which I have been trying to learn you, but which your hearts will never be properly open to, without you take great care and pains on your part, to remember as much as you can of what you hear from me, and to set aside your spare time to think well of it. Now if you think it worth your while to take care and pains to get meat for your bellies, and clothes for your backs, to make you live comfortably in this world, surely you cannot be so blind to your own good and happiness, as not to know how much it is worth  
your

your while to take care and pains to learn all those good things, the doing of which will bring God's love and blessing on you, and make you happy for ever.

To be happy for ever—to go where no pain, no sorrow, no want, no trouble can come upon us; where our hearts will be filled with all manner of goodness, and the blessing of God Almighty, is the pleasing and comfortable hope which all good people have, who believe in God, fear him, love him, and serve him, by doing all those good things which I have so often told you of. Not that the best of us, poor weak creatures as we are, can ever deserve all this happiness from God Almighty, in any thing that we do; but because his mercy and goodness are so great, that he is pleased to bring all this goodness upon us, for our trying to obey his commands and to please him. And after all what is desired of us? Nothing more than what is necessary for our own happiness, even in this world. In doing what is truly good for ourselves, and for our own ease

ease and quiet, we perform our duty to God and to our fellow creatures. It surely is for our own ease and quiet, that, when we rise in the morning, before we begin our daily business, we can kneel down and pray to God Almighty for his help and support. It surely is for our own ease and quiet that, after our daily work is over, we can think upon God before we go to sleep ; thank him for his mercies, and pray to him for his help, if we be troubled and afflicted. This wipes the tear from the eye of sorrow, and brings comfort to the heart of the unhappy. It surely is for our own ease and quiet, to be kind and to do good to every body, because it makes every body love and befriend us. Thus we may plainly see, that to mind truly our own good and happiness, is all that God Almighty desires of us, to cause him to shower down his blessings upon us. So far from desiring us to neglect our business, he commands us to be industrious, and to get an honest livelihood for our own support and our families, and to help our fellow creatures. All that he desires of us is, that we  
 should

should not so far mind the business of this world, as to forget him who made it, and made ourselves, and from whom every thing comes ; but that we should set apart a certain share of our time, to open our hearts to him alone, in praise, in thankfulness, and in prayer.

Such are the easy and just commands of our great Almighty God. There is no other God but him. Every thing that is made is the work of his hands. Every thing that lives, lives by the breath of his mouth. His seat is in the heavens above, and his eye and his power are over all things. The sun, the moon, and the stars, without number, together with this world, he has hung in the air, in a wonderful manner, and directed them to move in the same order and the same course, which they always keep, for the good of all his creatures. His mercy, his justice and his kindness, most clearly shine, in making our own happiness consist in our obedience and duty to him, and our duty to our fellow creatures. According as we do these.

these, or neglect them, so he will reward or punish us, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.

It is true, your hearts have long remained in blindness and darkness, as to these truths, and therefore it can only be expected, that you should become sensible of them by degrees. Yet there are some among you, who seem to have thought of them more than the rest, having given proper answers to the questions that were asked them, while others of you remained silent. Now as most of you are equally able to think upon what I have told you, and to tell me what you think of it, so of course I must be best pleased with them, who have been most ready to answer me, because they prove to me that the pains I have taken to teach them what is good, have already been of some use. To these I have to say, that as they begin to be sensible of what is good, and to feel how much better and happier they are for it, so I hope they will continue in it, and think upon it more and more, so as that they may  
become

become better and better, which will bring the love and blessing of Almighty God upon them, and make them happy. And it is fit also for them to remember, that if they should again turn to badness, after being told what is good, and shewing themselves sensible of it, they must not only expect correction and punishment from their master, but what is much worse, the anger of God Almighty, and that he will take from them his love and his blessing.

To the rest of you, who, I fear, think too much of the business or pleasure of this world, and do not allow yourselves that little time which you may easily spare, to think of God Almighty, and to pray to him, I hope what I have read to you this day, will be sufficient to put you in mind of your duty towards God, and your fellow creatures, and to cause you to attend to it. By it you will plainly see, how easy that duty is, which God has required of you, and how much it is for your own good and happiness, that you should consider and think of it properly, and  
fix

fix it in your minds, so as to give a proper account of it, and to make it the way for you to walk in. In this, and in all that I have read to you, I have endeavoured to use such words as I thought you would best understand; but if I either have told you, or should tell you any thing, that you may not know the meaning of, it is my wish that you should always ask me, and I will try to make it plain to you.

May God, the Father of all goodness, send his light and his grace into all your hearts; to keep those who begin to be sensible of what is taught them, in the right way; to cause those to think more about it, who have not taken proper care and pains; to bring you all to know and to do that goodness which is shewn to you, and to make you all deserving of his love and his blessing upon you.



## DISCOURSE X.

*Of Mercy and Kindness.*

I HAVE been trying to shew you all, the plain path you ought to walk in to become good and happy. In doing this, I have also made you see that we never can be happy, without we are good; and therefore that your own ease and quiet is in your own power, as you will feel in your hearts, according as you keep in those good ways which I have been working to smoothe before you. The great line to goodness and happiness I have already marked out to you, and in some measure cleared the road before you; but I wish to make it plainer still, by telling you yet more of your duty, especially that part of it which belongs to the great rule of “Doing to others as we wish to be done by.”

After having said so much to you about God Almighty, the Father and Maker of  
all

all things, whose goodness, wisdom, and power are seen in all his works, and are much greater than we can tell or think of, I hope I need not again tell you your duty to him. You must know how you are to fear him, to love him, to trust in his mercy and goodness; to honour and respect his name, and not to put it to any common or bad use; and in what manner you are to pray to him and give him thanks. If you know this your duty towards him (which you must now do, as it has been so often told you) it will be your own faults if you do not think of it properly, and apply yourselves at all times to it. Your own good and happiness for ever depends upon it; and if you neglect or slight it, you are without excuse, and cannot expect the favour and love of God Almighty.

I need say no more concerning your duty towards God; but in the great line of your duty to others, there are a number of good things to be taken in, which you may not yet

yet be so sensible of as you ought, and therefore it is my duty to point them out to you.

And first, it ought to lead you to be very different from negroes in common, who, in general (as others would be if they were bred up in the same manner) are a cruel people to every thing which comes under their power. They are hard hearted to each other, and they cut and slash the poor brute creatures that fall into their hands. This you must plainly see is not only against that great law of God—of doing to others as we wish to be done by ;—but is also a very ungrateful and wicked behaviour towards God, from those who believe in his goodness. It is said in the great bible, of which I purpose to tell you more at a proper season :—  
*“ Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is  
 “ merciful,”* that is to say, that as God has been good and kind to us in giving us life, in making this world and the creatures in it for our use ; in forgiving us our sins, and in making out for us an easy way to be good and happy for ever ; so ought we to be  
 good

good and kind to every living creature whatever. We should shew this kindness even to a horse, a dog, or cat, or any other brute beast under our care; and the more so, because these poor dumb creatures cannot complain, and cannot help themselves. This good and merciful disposition in us will make us “to do to others as we wish to be done by;” and will also be pleasing to God Almighty, who is too good and too merciful in himself, to have made so many creatures to be of service to us, for us to abuse and ill treat them. I do not however mean by this, that we are never to punish, or correct any creature that is under our care; because if they were not punished and corrected when necessary, they would be of no use to us: but we should never punish and correct them barbarously, or more than is according to justice; and we should be as kind and good to them as we can.

If, therefore, God Almighty requires that we should be kind and merciful to the brute beast that is under us, how much more  
will

will he expect that people should be kind and good to one another. This is the great duty which he has ordered us to do, and in doing it he has placed our own good and happiness. Every body must know how much easier and happy they are, when they are kind, good natured, and obliging, by which they make all people love them, than when they are spiteful, ill natured, and grudging, by which they get nothing but hatred and ill-will, and bring trouble upon themselves. The person who is kind and good tempered, and willing to serve and to help another as much as he can, makes all people his friends and well-wishers, the thought of which in itself, must give him a great deal of happiness; while the bad tempered, cruel, and spiteful person can never be at rest, because he knows that every body dislikes him. This helps to prove what I before told you; that is, that God Almighty has made our duty so easy to us, that, in doing it, we do nothing more than what we must do, to make ourselves truly happy.

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Let me advise you, therefore, to pray to God Almighty, who is all kindness and goodness himself, to make you deserve his mercy and his love, by shewing all the kindness and goodness in your power, to every body, and to every creature whatever:—to weed all malice, spitefulness, ill nature, and covetousness out of your hearts; and, in the stead, to plant good nature, goodwill, affection, and mercy; that thus learning to do all the good in your power, that you may fulfil the great law of God, of “doing to others as you wish them to do unto you.”

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## D I S C O U R S E XII.

### *Of Honesty.*

I TOLD you all last Sunday, that one part of the great duty of doing to every body, as we wish every body to do to ourselves,

selves, was to be good natured and kind-hearted to every creature that we have any thing to do with ; to help them, and to do them all the good we can ; and to mind this so much as even to be merciful and kind to the poor brute beast that is in our power, as well as to our fellow-creatures. Now, I hope you will all think well of this, and mind to do it, because there is no good thing that God Almighty will love people more for, and blefs them, than for being good natured and kind-hearted. He has been all mercy and goodness to us himself, in giving us life, in filling this world with all things fit for our use ; and laying before us an easy road to goodness and happiness ; and therefore, in return, he expects from us that we will be as good and kind as we can to our fellow-creatures, and to the poor beast that is of use to us ; besides, we must remember that it is doing nothing more than what we wish others to do to ourselves, which certainly is, that they should be kind-hearted and good to us.

Now,

Now, another part of the great duty of doing to others as we wish others to do to ourselves is, that we should be honest and just in all we have to do with every body whatsoever. This is nothing more than what you must know you wish every body to be to yourselves. You would not like any body to steal from you, or to cheat you; and therefore you should never steal from any body, or cheat them, even in the smallest thing whatever. Whoever takes what does not belong to him, if it is only a bit of bread, or a bit of meat, is certainly a thief; and if he uses himself to it, he will go on in his badness till he takes more, and brings himself to great shame and punishment. It is the same in cheating. The person who cheats another of a \* *black dog* will soon be brought to cheat another of a dollar, and so will go on until brought to some bad end: for no thieves or cheats can ever hope to come to any good, or to die peaceably, and with a good heart like other people. Though they think

\* The lowest piece of money in the West Indies.



they can steal or cheat so cunningly as that nobody can find them out, yet God Almighty sees all their badness, and will surely bring it to light, and bring them to shame and punishment. I beg you will all of you remember this and keep it in your hearts; for if, when people are going to do any manner of badness, they would but think well of what they are about, and that the all-seeing eyes of God himself are upon them, they would then be afraid of doing what is wrong, and would save themselves that trouble, shame and punishment, which God always brings upon all wickedness.

But as to what I was telling you of the badness of stealing and cheating. Some of you, I am willing to hope and believe, know your duty so well, as not to do such wicked things. You see that it is wrong to steal what belongs to another, or to cheat another, which is the same thing (as cheating is still taking away what belongs to another, though in a different manner), and as you would have reason to be very angry, if any body  
were

were to serve you so, you will take care not to do it to others. Yet it is proper to put you in mind of your duty in this matter, that you may keep in it, and become more and more faithful and honest. And as for any of you who may not have minded it before it was told you, God Almighty will forgive you for what past before you knew better, if you take care never to do so again; but to leave off such bad things as stealing and cheating, and to live honestly, as God Almighty orders that people should do, which, if they mind, he will love and bless them for. And here let me tell you all, not to be too covetous, or hard in your bargains one with another, which often is not much better than cheating; but rather to give up little matters, and deal kindly and friendly by one another, as all good people ought.

What I have read to you this day, has been to shew you all, that if we wish to be good, we must be honest: you must still keep this in mind, and do it, and never take any thing that does not belong to you, or  
cheat

cheat another person, however much you may be in want; for wanting, or wishing for a thing ever so much, is no excuse for doing a bad thing to get it. You must easily see, that if this was suffered, there would be no goodness in the world, for people often want and wish for many things, which cannot be got but by doing wickedness. When this happens, it is the duty of every good person to get the better of such wants and wishes, and put them out of their minds, rather than do any badness to satisfy them. It is not therefore the want of any thing that will be any excuse before God Almighty, or with our fellow-creatures, for stealing, cheating, or doing any other bad thing. Whenever we want any thing that we cannot get at, without going through badness for it, we must make ourselves satisfied without it. This is true goodness; for this is getting the better of what we desire, rather than do any harm for it, and this God Almighty will love and bless us for: may he therefore shew his mercy and his grace towards us, so as to make us able to get the better

better of our desires, rather than do any thing bad to satisfy them.

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## DISCOURSE XIII.

*Against Malice, Hatred, and Slander.*

YOU have been fully told, how great a part of your duty it is, in doing to every body as you would wish to be done by, that you should be kind-hearted, obliging and merciful in all you have to do with your fellow-creatures, or even to the poor beast that is useful to you. And also, that you must, in all things, be honest in all your dealings, and never wrong any body, in any manner whatsoever. The next part of your duty which I have to shew to you, and which you must mind to do, if you would wish God to bless you, is, that you should bear no malice or hatred in your hearts, against any body, so as to do them any badness,

ness, but so far from it, that you must even do good to those who hate you, and may wish to do you harm ; for this is the word and the law of God Almighty, as written in the great bible, of which more at a proper season. And though it may seem odd to you at first, that it is our duty to do good to those, who would do bad to ourselves, yet when you come to think of it as you ought to do, you will find that no person can be good without forgiving those that bear malice against them, and even do them wrong. For all malice and all wrong are wickedness in themselves, and therefore, if another person be wicked enough to bear malice against me, and to do me wrong, yet if I were to keep malice in my heart against him, and to do him wrong, I should thereby become just as wicked and as bad as himself. And it would be no excuse for me to be wicked, because he was so before ; for we are not to be led into badness because other people do it. They who know what goodness is, are bound to follow it, whatever other people may choose to do. And when God Almighty

ty tells us, that we are in all things to do to others as we wish them to do to us, he tells us also that we must mind this and follow it, as well to those who do not love us, as to those who do ; for, according as we wish good to come to ourselves, so must we try to do good to every person whatever. This being what we are directed and ordered to do by God Almighty, who is all forgiveness and goodness to us, we are not then to think of bearing malice in our hearts, and doing wrong, because another person may be wicked enough to do so to ourselves ; but we are to pray to God to turn his heart, and to make him better ; we are to try to shew him where he is wrong, and perhaps our good and forgiving temper towards him, may make him ashamed and sorry for his badness, and bring him over to that goodness which we shew him. If, however, he should still be obstinate, and continue to bear malice and hatred against us, all we can do is to keep ourselves away from his company and acquaintance, not to put ourselves in his power, and still to forgive him, so far  
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as to do him any good that he may be in want of, when it lies in our way to do it. For this is that kind of forgiveness which God Almighty desires us to shew. He does not expect that we are not to feel any wrong that a person tries to do us, or even that we are not to be angry ; but that we shall not suffer this wrong to make us do any wrong or wickedness in return, or to keep us from doing any good which may happen to be in our power, even to the person who would wrong ourselves.

This being another part of our duty, of doing to others as we would wish them to do to us, you may plainly see from it, that if God Almighty orders that we should ever do good to those that hate us, he certainly orders at the same time, that we are to keep ourselves from doing them any wrong whatever ; and this it is my duty to shew to you, and yours to mind, because it is but too common, when people fall out, or have any dispute, in the anger, the malice, and hatred of their hearts, they say all manner of bad things of one another, which neither of  
 them

them deserves, and which, if neither of them had said, they might soon have made up the quarrel between them. Now there is no excuse for telling lies at any rate, much less for that wicked kind of lies, which do other people wrong, spreading bad stories about them, which they do not deserve. There is hardly any fault, which God will more severely punish than this, because it is so bad in itself, and breeds so much mischief. Mind therefore, that however any person may bear malice against you, hate you, or do you wrong, it is your duty never to accuse them wrongfully, or to say any thing false of them. If you have occasion to speak of them, tell all the good of them that you know, but say nothing bad of them if you can help it, and, at any rate, nothing that is not true. When the person with whom you have quarrelled, and who may have anger and malice against you in his heart, hears how well you have spoken of him, and that you have said nothing false of him, perhaps it will turn his heart towards you, and lead him to do you good also, and

so



so be the means of making you friends. But whether it does so or not, you may be sure of what is a great deal better than the love of any person, that is, that God Almighty will love and bless you for it, for having kept his word and his law, which he ordered you to follow. And this is what we ought to look to, and what ought to be the end of all our goodness, that is, that we may please God and deserve his blessing ; which if we do, we may be sure that we can always depend upon his mercy and goodness. For his eyes are always upon those who are good, and keep his word ; and such are his mercy and his kindness, that though he may and does forgive many of the bad things we do, if we are truly sorry for them and leave them off, yet he takes an account of all our goodness, and never fails to shew us his love and blessing for every good thing we do, however trifling it may be. And this we must be sensible of, for the more good we do, the happier we feel ourselves, which happiness God sends down upon us ; besides, the great and pleasing hope which he  
 puts

puts into the heart of all them who love him, fear him, and keep his law and his word, that after this life he will make them happier than words can tell, and that forever. You may see, therefore, how much it is for your own good, that you should mind every good thing that is told you ; that you should listen to it with your ears, and draw it into your hearts ; that you should be careful to remember it, and to lock it up there, that you may turn to it, and think upon it as often as you can, for the more you think of it, and the more you do it, the more truth and the more happiness you will find in it.

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## DISCOURSE XIV.

### *Against Drunkenness and Excess.*

THERE is one wicked thing, which is too common with many people, and which, though

though I cannot say I can charge you with it, it yet will be very right to tell you about, to give you warning never to fall into it, because it is against the word of the law of God, and is not only hurtful to ourselves, as bringing sickness and pain upon us, but also is the cause of our often doing a great deal of mischief to other people. The wickedness I mean is drinking too much strong drink, so as to become drunkards; which not only puts it out of people's power to do their duty as they ought to do, but at the same time puts it into their heads to do every thing that is mad, foolish, and wicked: so that in one hour, nay, in one minute's time of drunkenness, they may do as much badness, as may make themselves and others miserable for ever afterwards. As it fires the blood, and gets up into the head, it puts people out of their proper senses, so that no man, let him be ever so good when he is sober, can possibly tell what wickedness he may not do when he is drunk. This has been proved in a great many instances, where it has been known that people of the best of characters

characters when sober, have been hurried on to such acts of wickedness when drunk, that before they knew what they were about, they have even killed their best friends or nearest relations. Now let us only think what a person must feel, who perhaps could not bear to hear of such wickedness when sober, much less to think of doing it, when he finds, after coming to his senses, that he has taken away the life of his fellow-creature, and one whom he most loved, in a fit of drunkenness ! Is it possible that he can forgive himself for it, or ever be happy afterwards ? And after all, what is it for, that he brings all this misery upon himself ? Is it for the pleasure of getting drunk ? A mighty pleasure truly, that puts a man out of his senses, and makes him behave himself like a beast ; that exposes him to be laughed at and ridiculed by every body, and brings him to tumble and wallow about in his own filth, like a hog rolling in the mire.

I have told you of this wickedness for two reasons ; first, because it does so much mischief

chief and harm in the world, that you cannot be put too much upon your guard against it : next, because, though you may be sober enough in common, yet at one time of the year, which is Christmas, it is a practice among you to take more strong drink than is usual to you, and enough to lead you into drunkenness, and all the badness that follows it. What is the proper meaning of Christmas, and of its being set apart for people to make themselves happy, I shall tell you when your hearts are better prepared to hear of it. But in the mean time, you may be sure of this, that God Almighty never intended that we should pass any time whatever in drunkenness. And as I have been trying to bring you into the knowledge of God, and of the law of his word, so it is your duty on your part, to leave off all bad ways which you might have had, before you were told of him, and of what is good.

Further, it is a part of the word of the law of God that we should not think too  
much

much of eating, drinking, or fine clothes ; and this for a very good reason, because, they who so much mind their bellies and their backs, will bring themselves to believe that they live for no other purpose than to provide for them. But God Almighty made people for a much better end than this. He made them that they should believe in him, fear him, love him, and worship him, that they should be good, kind, and charitable ; that they should keep his laws and his word, that so, being tried and proved by him in all manner of goodness, he may bring them into that better world for which he first made them. This is what we are always to think of and look forward to ; and therefore, as the world we are in now is only meant for a trial to us, and for a passage to a better if we deserve it, we are not to set our hearts too much upon any thing that is in it, whether it be meat, or drink, or clothes, money, or any thing else ; for to be covetous of these things, and to fix our desires upon them, must certainly carry away our thoughts from the fear of God Almighty,

Almighty, and from that goodness which we must follow to please him.

But we are not to suppose from this, that God Almighty has forbid us the use of any thing in this world, which may belong to us, and which we want, to nourish and comfort us. No: He, in his goodness, has made them all for our use and our happiness, and he is highly pleased with us when we partake of them as we ought to do, that is with a thankful heart to him as the giver of them, and with decency, cheerfulness, and moderation, so as to take no more of them than will satisfy nature, and do us good, preserving us in health and spirits to go through our duty as we ought to do. If we have any thing more than this, as it has been freely given to us by God Almighty, so we ought freely to give to those who are in want. This is goodness. This will make us happy, and God Almighty will take pleasure in seeing it; for our happiness was the end for which he  
made

made us, and if we do not follow the way to it, it is our own faults.

May he therefore send his heavenly grace among us, that in this, and in every thing else, we may endeavour to live as we ought to do; not in rioting and drunkenness, which will weaken and hurt our health, make us commit mischief and wickedness, and bring misery upon ourselves and others; not in greediness and feasting our bellies, which only brings sickness and pain upon us, while so many of our poor fellow-creatures are in want of what it would do us good to spare them; not in covering ourselves with finery, while, if we were to buy good plain clothes which would be more useful and less expensive, we might have something to spare to clothe some poor and naked object who has nothing to buy him a covering; but in enjoying the blessings which God Almighty sends to us, with decency and moderation, with charity and gratitude, by taking no more to ourselves than we stand in need of, and by sharing them



them with those who are in want; which will bring the love of God upon us, and cause him never to suffer us to be in want ourselves.

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## DISCOURSE XV.

*Against Hypocrisy and Presumption, and of a good Conscience.*

YOU have all seen the way that I have fallen upon, and the pains I have taken, to teach you that which is good. I have set apart my Sundays for this particular purpose; and I regularly pray to Almighty God that you negroes may know his word, and become better people, so as to deserve his love, and the happiness which he has in store for those who are good. What I meant to be a blessing to you, let it not be turned into a curse upon your heads, which it surely will if you do not mind what I have told you, and try to leave off every bad way  
which

which you might have had, while your hearts were in the dark, and you knew no better. All I ask from you, all I wish for, in return for the pains I am taking with you, is, that you should be good for your own sakes, that you may be happy, and that God may bless you. It takes up my time and my thoughts to tell you all these things, which I shall willingly give, so long as you will be mindful of them, and make them properly useful to yourselves; but if you only make an outside shew of being good, and still keep any old badness in your hearts, without trying to get the better of it, the evil will be upon your own heads, and the pains I am taking will then become a curse to you. God will surely punish those who know what is good and will not try to do it, and he will punish those still more who pretend to any goodness which they have not; for this is making a mock and a game of goodness, and is lying, and falsehood before God.

But

But let not what I am saying to you be the means of driving any of you back into any of your former wickedness, or prevent you from trying to get the better of it. God Almighty, as I have often told you, is all goodness, mercy, and justice ; and never desires from us more than we are easily able to do. He therefore allows to all people who have been bad, for want of being brought up in the right way, and of being told what is good, a sufficient time to repent, and to become better and better by degrees. And if, through the weakness of their hearts, not yet become strong in goodness, they should now and then fall back into their old bad ways without thinking of it, if it be not any very great wickedness that they do, God Almighty will forgive them for it, if they are truly sorry for it, and tell the truth about it ; only they must take care to be more upon their guard afterwards, and to keep out of all manner of wickedness as much as they can. Nor must they suffer themselves to do any thing that they know to be wrong, in hopes that God in his goodness

ness will forgive them afterwards ; for this would be using his mercy and kindness to make us worse, which are given to us to make us better ; and we may be assured that God Almighty will never allow of this, without punishing it.

It is something very odd that people who have tasted the sweets of goodness, and the bitterness of wickedness, should not try to leave off all their old bad ways. When a person is good, he is afraid of nothing. He knows that nobody can find fault with him or accuse him with truth, that every body ought to love him, and he is happy and easy in his own heart. How different is the case with the person who is doing badness ? He is afraid of his own shadow. He always supposes that his badness will be found out, and is always thinking of the punishment that is coming upon him for it ; so that his mind can be never at ease. This alone ought to be enough to prevent people from ever being wicked, but how much more reason have they to try to keep out of it, when  
they

they think upon God Almighty, who sees every thing that we do, and always punishes wicked people in some way or other.

What goodness is, you have all of you been fully told many times over. It is doing your duty to God, to them with whom we have any thing to do in this world, and behaving as we ought to do in our different stations of life. Our duty to God, as I have already told you, is to believe truly in him, to fear him, to love him, to pray to him, and to think on him as we ought, as the great Father and Maker of all things, who looks into all things, and from whom all goodness comes. Our duty to every body in this world is to be honest and just in all our dealings; neither to cheat, or to take any thing which does not belong to us; to do harm to nobody, but to do every body all the good we can; and our duty in the different ways of life we are placed in, is to behave as is suitable to them, and do all the good we can in them. If masters, we are to be kind to and careful of those who  
are

are under us, both in sickness and in health, being of as much use to them as we can, and giving them what is necessary and reasonable for their support; not to require of them more than they can well go through with, teaching them what is good, and keeping them in proper order, and under proper government. If servants, it is their duty to obey all their masters and mistresses reasonable and proper orders, to be honest and true to them, and to take care of every thing that belongs to them; not to go away from their duty without leave; not to impose upon them, or tell them what is false; nor to see them wronged either by a fellow-servant, or any one else, without informing them. So that it is plain from this, that we have three different duties which we ought to fulfil to be good and happy. The first and greatest is our duty towards God Almighty, the Father and Maker of us all, whose law and whose word directs us to every thing that is good, so that when we do any thing that is bad, we likewise sin  
against

against our duty to God. The next is, our duty to all people living in the world, and to every poor brute creature: this duty orders us to be true, honest, kind, and charitable in all our actions whatsoever; to keep ourselves from doing harm, and to try to do all the good in our power. The third is, our duty in the way of life we happen to be in, which tells us to make ourselves as contented as possible in it, and to go through it so as to please those whom we have to do with, as far as we can please them by doing what is good and right. Of all these three duties, and how we are to go through them, I have particularly told you in the course of what I have read to you; and may God Almighty send his grace among us, to make us keep them in our hearts and our thoughts continually, and endeavour to do them: which, that we may be enabled to do, we must often open our hearts in true and sincere prayer and thanksgiving to him from whom all goodness cometh, and who hateth all manner of wickedness.

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE XVI.

*Against Heart-burnings, and disrespectful Behaviour.*

THE RE are two wicked things which I am sorry to find among you, and which I must therefore now tell you of, that you may learn to behave better hereafter. One is, that some of the eldest of you, after some little dispute keep heart-burning and malice against one another. The other is, that you young ones will not leave off your rudeness and badness, of making game and sport of those who are old.

As to the first, I have shewn you more than once already, and that not long ago, how it is the law and word of Almighty God, the Maker and Ruler of us all, and the Father of all goodness, that we should bear no malice in our hearts; that we should be merciful and kind even to the poor beast that is of use to us; and therefore how much more we ought to be so to our fellow-creatures.



creatures. It is no matter who they are; even if they are strangers; or if they are people who do not love us, still this is our duty towards them, and we shall find that God Almighty, who made us to be good and happy, and has put it in our power to be so, has given us this law of being merciful, kind, and forgiving, for very good and wise ends. It opens people's hearts, and brings them to love one another, in which there is a great deal of goodness and happiness; and it saves them from doing a great deal of sin and wickedness, which hatred and malice always bring along with them. I am sure I need not tell you how happy every person is, whose heart is not troubled with any hatred or malice against any body; who loves his fellow-creatures, and who has therefore a right to think that they love him also; and concerning the sin and wickedness which they do who keep malice and hatred in their hearts against one another, I can easily shew it to you from what may happen among yourselves.

You

You all know how I have tried, and am still trying, to teach you the law and the word of God Almighty, and all that goodness which comes from it, and from it only. This I am telling you, that by learning and minding to do it, you may do your duty towards him, and also towards your fellow-creatures, which is the only way for you to become good and happy. Now, before you come to hear these things, you must know that you ought to think well of what you are sent for, and that you ought to clean your hearts of all badness and all malice against any body, so as to have it fit and ready to hear and to take in the good word which is to be told you. If you do not do this, can you expect the love and the blessing of God upon you; or must you not rather expect his terrible anger and punishment, when you come to hear his word, with an outside shew of being good, while your heart is full of anger, hatred, and malice? so that to this wickedness, of bearing anger, hatred, and malice in your hearts, which is very bad in itself, you add that of lying and falsehood

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in the face of God, when you are come to hear his word, this is so wicked a thing, that it is particularly taken notice of in the great bible, of which I have promised to tell you more at a proper season. It is there said, that if you are coming to pray to God, and to offer him thanks, and should before remember, that you have any quarrel or ill-will in your heart, first go and make up that quarrel, and then come and offer thanks.

Let me therefore desire of you, if you have any quarrel with any body, but particularly among yourselves, who come here together to pray to God, and to learn what is good; that you will have it cleared up, and make friends again immediately. This you may easily do, because if you cannot come to an agreement about who is right or who is wrong, you may leave the matter to your fellow-servants; and if they cannot settle it, you may apply to me, and the person who has done the wrong, shall own it, and beg the other's pardon. This is the way that people ought to follow, who are taught

taught to pray to God, and what goodness is; and further, by thus settling disputes immediately, you will save yourselves a great deal of trouble and uneasiness; for, in general, quarrels begin from trifles at first, and only become bad and hard to be made up, by the unkind and unjust things which people say of one another, and do to one another, afterwards.

And now a few words to you younger ones, who I am sorry to say think so little of what is told you, that I fear I shall be obliged to add punishment to it, to make you remember it. It is a very common trick of yours, to be impudent and saucy to one of your fellow-servants, and to make game of him, because he is good natured enough to put up with it, though you know he is old enough to deserve more civil treatment and respect from you. As this is a wicked thing in you, and as God not only orders that children should honour, love and obey their father and mother, and their kin, but also that the young shall behave decently

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ly and respectfully to the old ; so if you will not leave off this badness, you must be punished for it. It will be best therefore for you, to remember your duty to a fellow-servant, who is so much older than you are ; to be civil in all your behaviour to him ; not to mock or make game of him, but to go to him and speak properly as you ought to do, when you are told to call him, and not to give him sharp or rude answers when he speaks to you. And I hope he, on his part, will learn to mind his duty, and to behave so well, as to deserve that civil and good treatment, as well by being good, as from his age.

What I have read to you all this day, while it again tells you of your duty to every body, must particularly put you in mind of your duty to one another, as fellow-servants, called together every Sunday by your master, to offer up your prayers to God, and to hear his word. You therefore ought to look upon yourselves as one family, and instead of quarrelling and disputing with each other,

other, as it is your duty to be of a forgiving and kind temper in your behaviour with every body, so you ought to be particularly kind, obliging, and forgiving among yourselves; and as it is also the duty of the young to pay respect to the old people every where, so they ought to shew it particularly to their fellow-servants in the same family; for by these means, people who are together, become useful to one another, and are good and happy in themselves, answering the great end for which God Almighty made them. I hope, therefore, you will for the future, mind to behave towards one another, as I have told you.

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## DISCOURSE XVII.

### *Recapitulatory and Admonitory.*

WHAT I told you of last Sunday, was in particular to shew you your duty to one another,

another, as fellow-servants living in the same family, and called together at the same time to join in prayer and thanksgiving to God Almighty, and to hear the word of goodness. From this you will know, that if any quarrels or disputes should at any time happen among you, you are to have the matter talked over directly, and made up, so as that there may not be time for any malice or ill-will to breed in your hearts, which are great sins and wickedness, and are against the word and the law of God, as written in the great bible; where to make people good and happy, they are told to love one another as brothers and sisters; to forgive even those that hate them and treat them ill, and to do them good only in return. The same good book, the bible, also shews the duty of the young to the old: In particular, that children should love and honour their fathers and mothers, and obey their orders in every thing that is good and right; and it also says in many places, that young people should not be forward, nor rude, nor talkative, but should be modest, decent, and  
silent;

filent ; and, in particular, should always be civil and respectful to those who are old.

Now you must observe, that what is good for people to do in their behaviour to one another, as living in the same family, is just as good for them to do in their behaviour to every body in the world ; only people who are more often together, have more often occasion to do these duties to each other. Therefore you are to see from this, that if it is our duty to make up any quarrel or dispute immediately with those with whom we live, to prevent the breeding of any ill-will or malice in our hearts against them, it is no less our duty to try to make up our quarrels and disputes immediately with every other person, and to be forgiving and kind to them, even though they may hate us, and try to do us harm. In the same manner, it is the duty of the young, not only to be civil and respectful to the old people among whom they live, but also to every old person whatever. Indeed, as I have before told you, so I now repeat to you, that the ways of goodness, which God Almighty has laid down to



us, and which are particularly spoken of in the great bible, are plain and easy, and every where the same to be observed towards every body. In one place we are told, that God Almighty himself has declared it, in saying : “ And now, what do I ask of thee O man, “ but to do justice, to love mercy, and to “ walk humbly before God.” *To do justice* I have often told you is to be honest, true, and just in all our dealings ; not to steal, nor to cheat, nor say what is false on any account whatsoever. *To love mercy*, is to be kind-hearted, to do to others all the good we can ; to bear no malice, and to do no ill even against those who hate us. *To walk humbly before God*, without which no person can be good, is to love him, to fear him, and to honour him above all things ; to open our hearts to him often in prayer and thanksgiving ; to listen to his word, and to obey his commandments. They who live in this manner can never be unhappy. Whatever misfortunes, whatever troubles, whatever crosses come upon them, they will bring their minds to think, that God Almighty has sent them for their good, to clean their  
 hearts

hearts from wickedness, to try them, and to bring them to happiness in the end. From doing all these good things, they will always find peace and comfort springing up in the bottom of their hearts: and though they may be poor, though they may be in want and in distress, yet their hope in God Almighty will support them under it, and make them much happier than those who have every thing else they can wish for. For it is not money, it is not nice meats, rich wines, fine clothes, that we are to look for, among those blessings which God Almighty will bring upon those who are good; these things we often see the worst of people have the most of; but if we were to look into their hearts, we should find that all this outside shew of being happy, was nothing but a cover to fears, troubles, and miseries within, which a good person would not feel for all the riches in the world. Besides, these things themselves are not what we actually want; for he who can just get enough to put plain coarse clothes upon his back, and to get plain and wholesome meat and drink to satisfy his hunger and his thirst,

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has all that is of use to him, all that can keep him in health and in spirits, and if he had more, would probably only bring sickness and pain upon himself, by taking too much of them. No, the good things which we are to look for from God Almighty, are far above all these. They are patience to bear the evils of this world ; strength and resolution to fight against them ; submission to God Almighty's will to be contented under them ; the whole crowned with a never failing hope and belief in him, that he will lead us through our trials and distresses, into a better world at last.

I cannot too often tell you, that it is your duty to mind all these good things in every way of life, and in every place you may be in. Among the many changes and misfortunes of this life, there is no telling what may happen to part us from each other ; and you may not always be with a master, who will take pains to teach you, to make you good and happy. At all times therefore, when goodness is laid before you, you should open your hearts to receive it, and lock it up  
there ;

there; that in all situations, and in all conditions of life, you may make yourselves content, by fixing your hopes in Almighty God, and looking up to him as your Father and Protector, which he certainly will be, if you try to serve him as you ought, and to keep his word.

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## DISCOURSE XVIII.

### *Of Prayer.*

I HAVE for some time past been teaching you to say a short prayer to God Almighty, every Sunday before I read to you, in hopes that God, who sees and knows all that we do, will be pleased to hear, and to accept it, so as to send his grace into your hearts, to clean them from wickedness, and to make them ready to receive and mind every thing that is good. This he will certainly do, if you only pray to him with a true heart, trying at the same time to do every thing that is good, and to keep yourselves out of all manner

ner of badness. You must, therefore, see how much it is in your power to bring down God's love and blessing upon you; for as the eyes of God Almighty are every where, at all times looking upon all the great works he has made, though we cannot see him, so whenever we pray to him he is always ready to hear and to take notice of it, and will do so; punishing us as we shall deserve, if we dare to be so wicked as to pray to him with a false heart, and sending down his goodness upon us if we pray to him with that love, fear, and truth towards him which we ought.

Indeed, if we would but bring ourselves to think as we ought to do of God Almighty, and all that he hath done—how, from his great power, he is able to look into every thing that is done by his creatures, and does look into it, we should then find what it is to pray to God; we should be afraid to pray to him with a false heart, or in a careless idle manner, as knowing he would see such wickedness and punish it; and it would be our greatest pleasure and happiness in this world, to pray  
to

to him seriously and in truth as we ought. For, poor weak creatures as we all are, and not able to do any thing of ourselves without his help and his permission, who made us as we are and gave us life, only think what a satisfaction it ought to be to us to lift up our hearts to him, who is always looking over us, either to thank him for his goodness, or to beg him to help us, when we know not what to do ourselves. To thank him for his goodness, is the least return that his creatures can offer for it, and he will receive it of them willingly, so as to shower down more goodness upon them: besides, to a person believing properly in God Almighty, and loving and fearing him, can there be a greater pleasure than feeling his kindness, and pouring our thanks from the heart for it? If we want his help, the hope and the belief that he will take care of us, and bring us out of our troubles, makes our prayers to him the greatest comfort we can feel in distress. Accordingly, such is the great use and service of prayer, that there never was a person yet, in any situation, who prayed truly to God, but who immediately

immediately found his heart comforted. I beg you will all of you attend to this, and think how good a thing it is for you to believe in God, to love him, and to fear him, and to pray to him with a true and good heart as you ought. But, though such is the great use and service of prayer, there is yet something very particular that we ought to mind also; that is, to try to keep from all wickedness, and to do every thing that is good, by which we shall please God, who will then be always disposed to hear our prayers, and not to shut his ears against us; for though he may shew his mercy to the wicked, on their being truly sorry for what they have done, and bending their hearts before him, yet wicked people are always in this great danger, “ of losing the grace “ of God entirely from their hearts, and being given up by him to that misery and “ destruction which they have deserved.” Next, as I have told you on a former occasion, we are not to pray to God for trifles, or to point out to him what we want, who only knows what is good for us. If we are in trouble, we are to pray to him truly and sincerely

sincerely to help us, but to leave the manner of doing it to his wisdom and goodness. He may do it by comforting our hearts so as to make our troubles less than we have supposed them, and by putting into our thoughts the way to get the better of them. He may do it by raising up friends to us in the time of our distress, to assist us and relieve us from our difficulties. In short, the ways are without number, by which the goodness of God can bring us out of our troubles, in any situation, or under any circumstances : and knowing this, it is our duty to bear our present evils with patience, and while we do all that is right to get the better of them, to depend upon God Almighty to shew us his help in good time.

After all that I have now told you concerning praying to God, and giving him thanks for his goodness, I hope you will think properly of it. First, It is a duty we owe to him who is the Father and Maker of all things, and who directeth all things by his power, his wisdom, and goodness. Next, it is a spring of never failing happiness to  
open



open our hearts to him, who is our God, our parent, our comforter, and preserver. It will give us strength and spirits to do our duty in this world, without valuing it more than we ought; and it will fill us with the most pleasing hopes of that happier world to come, where the good will be all blessed alike in the presence of their God, and where trouble, sorrow, sickness, and pain, will be for ever at an end.

Christmas

# Christmas Day, 1787.

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## D I S C O U R S E XIX.

*Admonitory of the Lapse of Time, and suited  
to the Return of Christmas.*

IT was on last Christmas day that I first began to read to you, that I might shew you the way to goodness and to happiness, by leading you to believe in God, who is the Father and Maker of all things; to fear him and to love him with all your hearts; to pray to him, and to thank him for all his mercies, and to obey his commandments, by doing good to every body, as you would wish every body to do to you. A whole year has passed over our heads since that time, and Christmas is come round again. That whole year is now gone out of our reach for ever; and we are of course so much nigher the time we shall die

die and go into another world, than we were before it begun. Now, all the years we are to live are so very few, being even with those who live to the greatest age, seldom more than three or four times twenty years at best, that when we find one year is taken away from them (as that has passed since I first began to read to you) we may truly say that no small part of our lives has made to itself wings and flown away like a bird: for only let us think how quickly it is gone; to look back upon the times, since I first began to read to you, it seems to be little more than a dream which we have had in our sleep; and yet it is perhaps a twentieth part, or at least a thirtieth of what most of us have yet to live, even if no accident happen to us, and we come to a good old age.

In this manner are we all drawing on towards our graves; and, what is the worst of all, I fear, without thinking of it as we ought to do. Having therefore already put you in mind of the shortness of the time which we have to stay in this world, I  
purpose,

purpose, with God's help, to take the present opportunity to speak of such things, as may lead us to get ready for that other world, to which we must all go sooner or later : after which, I shall end what I have to say by telling you something of the meaning of Christmas, and the manner in which you ought to behave yourselves during that time.

And first, the shortness of the time we have to live in this world, is a very good reason why we should not give ourselves too much trouble about what happens to us in it : for we all of us know that we cannot look upon it as a resting place ; and that whether we live in ease and pleasure, or suffer hardship, pain and uneasiness ; whether we be servants and slaves to the rest of mankind, or whether we be kings and rulers over them, we must all die alike in the course of a few years. The grave is the common house which is made for us all ; and the only certainty we know of, is that we must all go to it. There, these bodies which we at present make use of, must

must return to dust again. We ourselves shall be called before God who made us, to receive his blessing, and to be made happy for ever, if we have endeavoured to deserve his favour, by passing our lives in goodness ; or to be punished according to his dreadful and just anger, if we have lived in wickedness, after being taught that which is good. Now, how foolish, how absurd, how wrong will it be in us, to give all our thoughts, and our care, to the things of this world, in which nothing else is certain than that we must soon leave them ; and at the same time, to forget, and to neglect to get ready for, the time of our departure to another world, where we are all to remove in so short a time. Accordingly, we find that the best and the wisest of men whom we either know, or have read of in books, have made it their chief care how to pass their time in this world as they ought ; that is, not to set their hearts too much upon the things of this world, but to try to keep away from all wickedness, and to do every thing that is good, that they might  
be

be ready for the only certainty, which is death. Thus prepared, they have waited with patience for the will of God Almighty; and when it has pleased him that the time of their deaths should come, instead of being afraid and unhappy at the thoughts of dying, they have felt more happiness in leaving this world, than in the enjoyment of any thing which they have found in it. Such are the sweets which the good man tastes in his last moments; and such we shall also partake of, at that certain hour which must come upon us, if we endeavour to follow their example.

But there is yet another very sound and good reason, why we should not be too fond of the things of this world, and suffer them to take up too much of our time and our thoughts; that is, that as well from the shortness of our lives, as from the mixture of evil, of pain, and of trouble, which is always more than the good we can enjoy in it, we have a right to believe that this life is intended as nothing more than a kind of trial to us as a state or condition in  
which

which we are placed by God Almighty, to be made ready for happiness in another. For, according to our understanding, it is impossible for us to think that one, who is so wise as we believe God to be, would make us in such a wonderful manner as he has done with all these thoughts, senses, and feelings, hopes, and fears about us if every thing were to be at an end with us in the course of a few years, and we were to perish for ever in the dust; yet, if we could even suppose this, it would be natural for us to suppose too, that we should be made to partake of nothing but pleasure and happiness, for the few years we have to live, that the life we were placed in, might at least be a blessing to us while it lasted; but when we find it directly the contrary of this, as we do; when we see that every person's share of sorrow, pain, and uneasiness in this world, is a great deal more than his share of pleasure and happiness; it would be harbouring wicked thoughts of God Almighty; it would be charging him not only with a want of mercy, but of justice, could we believe or think

think that, after going through this state of suffering and of sorrow, we were not to live again in a better. Therefore, it is highly reasonable for us to judge, that the life we are placed in at present, is nothing more than a state of trial for us, in order to make us ready, and to lead us forward to a better.

Having once fixed our belief as to this matter, what remains to be done, becomes easy and plain to us. We both learn to set no higher a value upon life than we ought, and to make a proper use of our time in it. In short, we should consider it as a journey upon a road, where, though we must take some necessary refreshment, as well as put up with some troubles and inconveniences, yet we should think but little of either, on account of the home we are going to, where our hearts ought to set up their rest.

Such are the thoughts which we ought to use ourselves to, concerning the life we are now placed in ; but on the present occasion there are also others, which I could wish to take



take root as well in your hearts as my own. I have already told you, that it is now a whole year since I first began to read to you, and that, as so much of our lives is gone, we are of course so much nigher the end of it. The nigher we are to the end of it, in the greater readiness we ought to be, to meet that time, when it may please God to call us from it. It is therefore the duty of us all, to inquire truly into this matter, that is, to examine our hearts, without cheating ourselves by any notions of our own goodness, that we may find out if we are better people now than we were a year ago.

And now to apply this particularly to yourselves, for whose good it is chiefly intended. Before last Christmas you had lived as it were, in darkness. From the way of life you had been used to, you thought but little, if at all, upon God Almighty, who made you ; and no person had held out a light to shew you that good way, which you ought to walk in. I thought a good deal, and often, upon your unhappy condition in  
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this respect, before I said any thing to you about it. The more I thought of it, the more I was sure, that though your skins were black, and it was the lot of most of you to be slaves and servants in the world, yet God Almighty made you with the same good and wise end, as he did the rest of mankind ; that is, he had made you able to learn what is good, and to become good, if you choose it, that you may deserve those blessings which he will hereafter give to those who do their duties in this life as they ought. Indeed, I could not think otherwise of the purpose for which God Almighty made you, without thinking both wickedly and foolishly.

From this time, I no longer troubled myself to find out, whether you could learn to read and write, and to do all other such things, so well and so soon as white people ; it was enough for me to know that God is too merciful, too just, and too kind to us all, to put it out of your power to become good, if you were properly taught. Indeed, not  
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only my own reason, and my own belief have convinced me of this, but also what I have seen of negroes, in different places and ways of life, who have had pains taken with them to teach them to be good. I then determined to endeavour to teach you to be good, and the way that I took for that purpose, was such as I thought most likely to work upon your hearts, in the state of darkness and wickedness you then were in.

To this end, as there is no goodness but what comes from God alone, who is the Father and Giver of it, it was the first part of my duty to shew you why you ought to believe truly in him. This I did by pointing out to you the great and wonderful things which we see every where around us, the way which they always move in, and the order which they constantly keep. These, as they made you believe that there was a God, and in his great power to do every thing, so did they also prove to you his goodness and his wisdom, in making, ordering, and taking care of them, as he hath  
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done. While I endeavoured to make you sensible of this, I did not neglect to shew you, in what manner you were to return thanks to God for his mercies ; and how you were to pray to him, so as to ask for nothing that might not be proper for you ; how you were to fear him, and to love him, to keep his name holy, to try to please him above all things, and therefore of course to keep out of all wickedness, as he loveth nothing but goodness. What this goodness was I also endeavoured to shew you, in as plain a manner as possible ; and among other things, that to please God, you ought to make yourselves as contented as possible in the way of life you are placed in, and I gave you many reasons why you should do so, drawn from the shortness of this life, and the little *real* difference there is, however great it may *seem* to be, between the lot of one person and another. From this I went on to shew you what that goodness was, which would be pleasing to God, and according to his commandments, in your behaviour and conduct towards other people ;  
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and how it consisted in that plain and easy rule, which is laid down in the great bible; that we should do to every body, as we wish every body to do to ourselves. After this I took different opportunities of shewing you, that these few words went so far, and took in so much of what was good, that if mankind were but to mind them, and to live up to them, they would need to be told nothing else to make them good and happy; for I pointed out to you at different times, that if we were to do to every body, as we wish every body to do to us, we should, on all occasions, be merciful, kind, and charitable to one another; forgiving, and not bearing malice, or ill-will in our hearts; honest in all our dealings, neither stealing from any one, or cheating them; always telling the truth when called upon, even if against ourselves; doing justice to every body as far as lieth in our power, and industrious and faithful in the service of those who employ us; treating them who are older than ourselves with due respect and civility; and using no rudeness or forwardness to any.

Now

Now, if people were to take care to behave in this manner to one another, instead of following their own bad ways and wicked desires, this, together with a true belief in God Almighty, thanking him and praying to him often as we ought, to keep our dependance upon him always in our thoughts, and having always a sense of our own weakness, to check our foolish vanity and our pride, which are too apt to lead us to forget God, and to make us think that we can do every thing of ourselves, even make ourselves good, without his help ; this, I say, with such a hope and dependance upon our Maker, would lead men in the straight and certain road to goodness and to happiness, and would be of much greater use to all mankind, than all the books that were ever written, or all the hidden things that were ever found out.

You therefore see, that for this year past, I have been taking pains to teach you, and to bring you forward in those things that are necessary to make you good and happy  
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I know of nothing in all that I have told you, that you cannot well understand the meaning of, if you have given your hearts to it as you ought. Your duty towards God, and your duty towards men and other creatures, has, I think, been made so plain to you, as that a child may understand it. All that remains for you is to do it, and you will be happy without seeking or wishing to know those things which will not make you better, and which, if they will not make you better, cannot make you wiser. But it now becomes your duty to examine your hearts, and to inquire how far you have done it, since I have told it you. Consider that you are now a year older than you were when I first began to read to you, and that of course, as I have already told you, you are so much nigher the end of your lives. Remember too what I have already told you, that though God Almighty will overlook the faults of those who do wrong for want of knowing better, yet from those in whose hearts the seeds of goodness have been sown, he will expect good fruit in return. Then think

think that you are no longer intitled to that forgiveness and indulgence for your faults, as those unhappy poor slaves are, who live in wickedness, because they have nobody to tell them how they ought to live. Afterwards, let such thoughts as these work upon your minds, to try yourselves fairly and truly, that you may answer justly to your consciences, to this question ; “ Whether, “ since your master has been teaching you “ what is good, you have become better “ than you were before; constant in prayer, “ and mindful of your duty to God, according to what has been told you ; and “ trying to follow all those lessons which have “ been taught you, to do your duty to men “ likewise ?” If you can safely say that you have, without favouring yourselves, still continue to make a good use of your time, and to improve yourselves in goodness. If any of you are sensible that you have not, but still continue to be bad, be fearful of the dreadful anger of God Almighty, who will judge you, according to the pains that has been taken to lead you in the right way.

Think



Think that one year has already passed without your becoming better, that another will soon follow, and how fast you are hastening on to the end of life, when you will be rewarded, or punished, according as you deserve ; and let this thought lead you to make a good use of the time which remains, to be truly sorry for your wickedness, and to make amends for it by becoming good.

And now to close the whole of what I have now said to you, with a few words concerning the present season of Christmas. Christmas is so called from our Saviour Jesus Christ, whom God was pleased to send into the world a long time ago, to turn people from their wickedness, and to be the means of saving their souls. He was born upon Christmas day, and it is for joy of his being born, and coming into the world for so good and merciful a purpose, that the time called Christmas is now kept. I will tell you more of this, if it please God, when you are better prepared to hear it ; but in  
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the mean time this is enough to shew you in what manner Christmas ought kept. We are to be glad and happy it is true, on account of God's great mercy to his creatures, thus shewn towards us; but at the same time, we must see that we ought to be glad and happy in such a manner as to please God: at such a time as this, we should be thankful unto him for his goodness, and rejoice in it, but at the same time be careful not to go beyond proper bounds, so as to be led into wickedness. We are to be merry, but without rioting or drunkenness, the bad consequences of which I have at different times told you of before, as I have of its wickedness; and therefore you must take care to keep away from it, and from every thing else that is bad. Go then, be glad, and be thankful to God Almighty for his mercies towards you, and enjoy what is given to you in moderate and in decent merriment; and may you at this time, and at all other times, behave yourselves in such a manner, as to bring the blessing of God upon you.

F I N I S.



